DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 193 676 CS 205 945

AUTHOR	Myers, Miles
TITLE	A Procedure for Writing Assessment and Holistic Scoring.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, Urbana, Ill.; National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, Ill.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
REPORT NO	ISBN-0-8141-3726-1
PUB DATE	80
CONTRACT	400-78-0026
NOTE	75p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 Kenyon Rd., Urbana, IL 61801 (Stock No. 37261, $4.00 member, $4.50 non-member)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Educational Assessment; *Evaluation Methods; Secondary Education; *Student Evaluation; Testing; *Writing (Composition); Writing Research
IDENTIFIERS	Holistic Approach; *Holistic Scoring; *Writing Evaluation

ABSTRACT

This book describes a procedure for scoring writing samples with holistic methods and for analyzing the results with methods from primary trait scoring, analytical scoring, and discourse scoring. Following an introduction, the four chapters in the book focus on (1) the selection of topics to be used in a writing assessment, (2) the format for giving directions to students taking the writing assessment, (3) the scoring of the students' work, and (4) the preparation of the report on the overall assessment. A list of references is included. (RL)

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ED193676

A Procedure for Writing Assessment and Holistic Scoring

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CS205945

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Book Design: Tom Kovacs

NCTE Stock Number 37261

Published 1980 by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills and the National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801

This publication was prepared with funding from the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. 400-78-0026. Contractors undertaking such projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their judgment in professional and technical matters. Prior to publication, the manuscript was submitted to the National Council of Teachers of English for critical review and determination of professional competence. This publication has met such standards. Points of view or opinions, however, do not necessarily represent the official view or opinions of either the National Council of Teachers of English or the National Institute of Education.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Myers, Miles.
A procedure for writing assessment and holistic scoring.

Bibliography: p.
1. English language--Composition and exercises--Evaluation. 2. Competency-based education. I. Title
LB1631.M85 808'.042 80-26674
ISBN 0-8141-3726-1

Contents

Foreword	vii
1. Introduction	1
2. Topic Selection	5
3. Directions	21
4. Scoring	30
5. The Report	47
References	68

Foreword

The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) is a national information system developed by the U.S. Office of Education and now sponsored by the National Institute of Education (NIE). It provides ready access to descriptions of exemplary programs, research and development efforts, and related information useful in developing more effective educational programs.

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ERIC is pleased to cooperate with the National Council of Teachers of English in making *A Procedure for Writing Assessment and Holistic Scoring* available.

Bernard O'Donnell
Director, ERIC/RCS

Introduction

Writing assessments can be used for a number of purposes—scores for explaining needs in Title I and Title IV, applications, definition of minimum competency standards required by state law, group profiles for evaluations of writing programs, and classroom instruction. No matter what the purpose, one of the most productive ways to assess writing is the holistic scoring of writing samples, using an overall impression to rate a paper on a numerical scale.

Writing is assessed in a number of other ways: (1) multiple choice tests, selecting the best item or the right item; (2) primary trait scoring of a writing sample, identifying the presence or absence of traits required by the rhetorical situation in the writing assignment (problem-solving letters must identify the problem); (3) analytical scoring of a writing sample, focusing on problems which are not specific to a given writing assignment (mechanics, word choice); (4) discourse scoring, using counts of T-units, cohesive ties, and other discourse units. These other ways of assessing writing have their uses, but each has an important deficit. The multiple choice tests attempt to assess writing skills without asking students to write something, and the error counts assume that the total of countable errors accurately reflects a paper's overall merit.

The procedure used in this book will illustrate how to score papers with holistic methods and analyze the results with methods from primary trait scoring, analytical scoring, and discourse scoring. Writing assessments using multiple choice tests will not be examined. Holistic scoring assumes that in a writing assessment students should write, and that error counts alone cannot accurately reflect competency levels. Holistic scoring assumes that what is needed first are some prototypes of competency levels, and second, some feature analysis of the prototypes themselves. The method presented here assumes that the best way to get prototypes is for trained readers, particularly experienced classroom teachers, to read samples of student writing and score the samples as a whole or as a single impression. In other words, the whole of a piece of writing is greater than the sum of its parts.

The use of prototypes to define a category of meaning has been investigated in a number of studies by Eleanor Rosch (1977). There have been basically two approaches for investigating what procedures are used in identifying meaning—the network approach and the prototype approach. The network approach says that people judge the meaning of a work by moving through a hierarchy of semantic levels—from animate (inanimate) to nonhuman (human), to species, to breed, and so forth. The prototype approach says that words have a meaning structure not captured in hierarchies, that, in fact, the structure is built around a range of what is typical. In one study Rosch showed that when people hear the word *bird*, what they have in mind is a prototypal bird that is the most typical in the category. She asked people to write sentences using the word *bird*, and then she replaced *bird* with some member of the category (*ostrich*, *robin*, *eagle*) and asked other people to rate how reasonable the meanings of the new sentences were. People found, for instance, that using the word *chicken*, certainly a member of the bird category, often produced nonsensical sentences. Therefore, the people who used *bird* were not thinking of *chicken* as their prototype. Although a chicken has many of the characteristics of a bird—wings, beaks, feathers, and so forth—most people recognize intuitively that *chicken* is not as typical of the meaning of *bird* as is *robin* or *eagle*.

The same situation exists in holistic scoring. Even though one can list all of the characteristics of a good piece of writing (clarity, coherence, complete sentences, smooth transitions, good spelling and punctuation), the best way to identify a good piece of writing is to ask people to select typical samples which they rate highly. This process has had a successful history in schools, districts, and states. Paul Diederich (1974, p. 55), who has done more than anyone else to develop holistic scoring procedures for use in the schools, describes what happens to teachers who have participated in holistic scoring for two years:

> After two years (at most), they move easily and naturally into the use of standard scores as a quicker and easier way to indicate their judgment of the general merit of a paper. We call this "ratings on general impresson," but it is no longer a blur: it is a quick summing up of characteristics that determine whether a paper is high, medium, or low in general merit. The teachers also have a common vocabulary for discussing the merits and defects of papers on which their grades disagree.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress has used holistic scoring to measure the writing competency of three ages—9, 13, and 17. The nine- and thirteen-year-olds wrote three essays each and the seventeen-year-olds wrote two, and samples were gathered from the three age groups throughout the country. John Mellon (1975) in his report on National Assessment says:

> First of all, teachers everywhere should applaud the fact that NAEP elected, even in its first-round writing assessment, not to employ the multiple-choice questioning format so widely used in commercial tests of writing ability. Equally enlightened was the recognition that the information gathered is baseline data. No prior norms or absolute standards were invoked.

This last point is especially important for schools or districts just beginning to gather writing samples. The first two or three collections provide baseline data, not absolute answers. In later years, the baseline data can be used in the interpretation of results. Mellon, in the same report (p. 23), comments on the reliability of holistic scoring:

> Holistic scoring techniques have been extensively researched over the past twenty years, particularly by personnel of ETS in connection with essay exercises used in various College Board examinations. It is known, for example, that inter-rater reliability correlations (measures of the extent to which raters agree with one another on the rating assigned to a given essay) reach as high as .70 to .80 and above if raters are given special training sessions prior to their work.
>
> Equally high correlations are found between initial ratings and delayed reratings of a given essay by the same reader (after special training), thus verifying intra-rater consistency. Put more simply, we know that trained readers are consistent in their own overall quality ratings and agree with the ratings of other readers about two-thirds of the time. This is a far higher percentage than we initially thought, on the basis of earlier studies of judgments of writing ability, could ever be attained.

Charles Cooper (1977, p. 19) makes the same point in his review of the research on holistic scoring:

> As emphatically as I can, let me correct the record about the reliability of holistic judgments: When raters are from similar backgrounds and when they are training with a holistic scoring guide—either one they borrow or devise for themselves on the spot—they can achieve nearly perfect agreement in choosing the better of a pair of essays; and they can achieve scoring reliabilities

in the high eighties and low nineties on their summed scores from multiple pieces of a student's writing.

The experience of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the Educational Testing Service, the school districts mentioned in this book, and the comments of Paul Diederich, John Mellon, and Charles Cooper—all of these sources of information can be used, if necessary, to convince school authorities of both the usefulness and reliability of holistic scoring in writing assessment if readers are given adequate guidance and training. What follows is a description of how to make a holistic assessment of student writing, focusing on (1) topics, (2) directions, (3) scoring, and (4) reports. No attempt is made here to examine all of the problems, doubtful procedures, or research issues in holistic assessment. The primary emphasis is on what works and what practical difficulties to avoid. The general consensus seems to be that, despite the many research issues and doubtful procedures, holistic scoring is still the best way to assess writing.

Topic Selection

The topics are selected after decision-makers have generally agreed on the goals and objectives of the writing assessment. The three most common goals in writing assessment are evaluation of categorical programs (Title I, Title IV), determination of whether individual students have attained minimum competency (graduation requirements mandated by state legislation), and estimation of instructional needs (school board or school site decisions).

The objectives are usually defined by a committee of community or professional representatives, or both. For instance, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which has been assigned the goal of sampling writing skills at various ages and in various parts of the country, appointed a seven-member panel to adopt objectives for a writing assessment. NAEP's staff then designed topics (NIE, 1970) to meet the objectives:

OBJECTIVE (NAEP Rpt. 3, pp. 16-17)

Write to communicate adequately in a business or vocational situation (information and application forms, mail order letters, business invitations, formal letters).

TOPIC

Fill in the blanks below. Do not use your own name. Each boy should call himself Adam Baker Carson. Each girl should call herself Alice Baker Carson. You may make up the rest of the information.

Name: _____
Last First Middle Initial

Address: _____
Number Street City or Town State

Zip Code: _____

Date of Birth: _____
Month Day Year

Today's Date: _____

OBJECTIVE (NAEP Rpt. 3, pp. 12-15)

Write to communicate adequately in a social situation (letters, directions, formal notes, addressing envelopes, invitations).

TOPICS

Letter of Invitation [age 13; Table 1, number 3]

About three months ago, Leo Logan moved from the city to the country. His father bought a farm, and now Leo's address is Rebel Road, Rural Delivery No. 1, Harris, Nebraska 69000.

Leo likes the country, but he misses his old friend Ozzie Drake. Leo's mother says, "Why don't you write to Ozzie and invite him to visit us for a week this summer?"

Write Leo's letter of invitation to Ozzie.

[Approximately 1-1½ pages of lined space were provided for the response.]

Recording a Telephone Message [age 13; Table 1, number 4]

You are going to hear a telephone conversation between two boys, Al and Ben. During the conversation, you will discover that Ben is going to have to write a note to his mother. Listen carefully to find out the things that Ben will have to say in his note. [Children then listened to the conversation reproduced below. It was *not* printed in the children's booklet.]

Al: Hey, Ben, this is Al. I called you to remind you you're supposed to come down to my house for supper tonight before the game.

Ben: Oh yeah, I remember. Your mother and father are going to pick me up on the way back from the barber shop. What time do you think you'll get here?

Al: Oh, around 5 o'clock.

Ben: O.K. I'd better leave a note for my mother. She won't be home unitl 5:30 and maybe she's forgotten that I won't be eating at home.

Al: You'd better remind her of the ball game, too. She's supposed to pick us up afterwards, isn't she?

Ben: That's right. Your father is taking us to the game but my mother is bringing us home. Thanks for reminding me. I'll write the note right away.

You will now have another chance to hear the conversation between Al and Ben. Listen to it carefully again and then, when the boys have finished talking, write the note that you think Ben should leave for his mother.

[Approximately one-half page of lined space was provided for the response.]

OBJECTIVE (NAEP Rpt. 3, pp. 53-64, 69-106)

Write to communicate adequately in the scholastic situation (notes and announcements, narrative, descriptive, and expository essays).

TOPICS

Essay Topics for Age 9

Going to School

Think about what happens when you go to school. Write a little story that tells what you do from the time you leave where you live until you get to school. Be sure to include everything that you think is important.

Forest Fire

Here is a picture of something sad that is going on in the forest. Look at the picture for a while. Do you see the forest fire? Write a story about what is happening in the picture. This is an important story because you want people to know about this sad event. [The picture depicts a forest fire with animals swimming across a river rapids to obtain safety.]

Astronaut

Here is a picture of an astronaut on the moon. Look at the picture for a while and think about what is happening. Now, pretend that *you* were the astronaut, and write a story about your walk on the moon.

Essay Topics for Age 13

Historical Event

If you could make an event in American history happen again so that you could play a part in it, which one would you choose? Write a composition in which you describe the event and explain why you chose that particular event and what part you would like to play in it.

Famous Person

Most of us look up to some famous person as a representative of the things we believe in or as the kind of person we would like to be. This person may come from any part of our society. For instance, we might admire Winston Churchill or Martin Luther King, Walter Schirra or Mickey Mantle, Florence Nightingale or Barbra Streisand. No matter where this person comes from or what kind of work he or she does, however, we can recognize such traits of greatness as determination, physical courage, the ability to inspire others, and faithfulness to some worthy cause. Think about a famous person whom you admire. Select a particularly admirable characteristic or quality of that person—such as Mickey Mantle's courage in the face of crippling physical handicaps or Florence Nightingale's determination to fight against strong governmental pressure. Write an essay of about 200–250 words describing this characteristic or quality. Be sure to provide an illustration of it from the person's life. Try to show that the person is great at least partly because of this characteristic or quality.

Essay Topics for Age 17

Tomato Lady

Here is a picture of a woman with some tomatoes. Look at the picture for a while and decide what is going on. When you have decided, write a story that tells what is happening in the picture and what is likely to happen next.

Famous Person

[Topic identical to that used at age 13.]

One must vary the topic to fit the need for different modes of writing. The most common modes are description, narration (fictional or actual), exposition (analytical), or a report (newspaper, magazine documentary). Letters, both personal and business, and persuasive essays are just two of the many possible variations on exposition (editorials), report or exposition (business letter), and narration (personal letter). One parent committee, convened to decide the objectives of a writing assessment, called for an assessment of writing skills in letters and argument. The teacher committee decided to measure the letter and the argument with the following topic:

Writing Sample—Letter

The following advertisement appeared in the local paper:

Summer Employment
Earn and Learn

On-the-job training for future positions in:
Medical Services Aide at Highland Hospital
Ticket Taker at local theatre
Grocery Clerk at local supermarket
Plumbing Assistant for plumbing company
Assistant to the manager of a circus

Earn $3.50 or more per hour while you learn a valuable skill.
Send letter of application to:
Ms. Laura Jones, Opportunity Training Center
2212 Fruitvale Avenue, Oakland, California 94231

Pretend that you are applying for one of the jobs listed. Write a letter explaining why you should be hired. You should give information about yourself. The information may be actual facts, made-up information, or a combination of fact and fiction. The letter should help you get the job. Be convincing. Do your best work.

Use the side of your answer sheet labeled "Writing Sample—Letter."

This topic allows the student to use actual facts or to make them up. What is troublesome about this assignment is the definition of a business letter. Some believe that the letter should have no indentation for paragraphs, some say yes. Others say the spacing between the date and the body of the letter is a critical feature, and indeed some businesses themselves stress the importance of this spacing. The way to resolve the issue is either to ignore the finer points of business letter form or to convene a committee of business teachers to pick the anchors. The point is that some modes, like the business letter, raise technical issues which must be resolved *before* the reading begins. In any case, the first step in selecting the topic is to decide the mode to be assessed and then have the teachers write on the possible topic or topics.

Those schools and districts that conduct holistic scoring over several years will be able to identify topics that work. Katharine Blickhahn (1973) has reported that two topics were particularly successful in the six-year assessment of the Tamalpais School District:

> Spring 1970
>
> If you had to choose to be some form of life other than a human being, what plant or animal form would you choose? In developing your piece of writing, describe what it would be like to live as that form of life, and explore some of the reasons for your choice. You may write a letter, a story, an autobiography, an essay or any other mode. You may write from the point of view of that life form—pretend that plant or animal has the power of thought and speech and use the first person. Assume you are writing for an audience of students.

> Spring 1972
>
> Write about an object you are especially attached to, something which has deep personal meaning for you, something which has become part of your life. You might want to consider the way you discovered it, the way it came into your life, the way it has taken on meaning through time. You may write a journal entry, a letter, a story, a brief autobiography, an essay, or other form.

The California writing assessment for high school seniors, a one-year project, surveyed the experience of several districts and selected the following topics (California State Department of Education, 1977):

> Description or Report
>
> Here is a diagram of an automobile accident. Study the diagram for a while and then describe the accident in your own words.

Exposition

Not all inventions have been good for all mankind. Name one invention we would be better off without. Discuss why we would be better off as a civilization without that invention.

Letter-Report

Look at the picture carefully. Pretend that you know about the situation because you were there. Then pretend you are *one* of the following people: (1) an older student helper writing to the principal of the school; (2) a parent writing to the parent of the little girl; or (3) a member of the audience writing to the music teacher.

Then write a letter to the person named, explaining what you saw and what you think about it.

Directions

When we make or do something, we usually follow certain procedures. There are certain steps to follow in baking bread, tarring a roof, cutting a pattern, painting a house, repairing a car, developing film, changing a tire, and performing other such activities. Choose something that you know how to make or do. Describe from the beginning the steps that you follow in order to make it or do it. Make the directions as simple and clear as possible. Someone who is not familiar with the process that you are describing should be able to understand and follow your directions.

Another California writing assessment, this one an evaluation of writing samples from those attempting to secure a high school diploma by examination, selected the following topics in 1976–1977 (Bernstein and Tanner, 1977):

November Test

A. Write one or two paragraphs explaining why you would or would not report another person you saw cheating on an important exam such as the CHSPE [California High School Proficiency Examination].

B. Write a letter of one or two paragraphs to a friend or relative who is seriously considering taking the CHSPE. On the basis of your knowledge of the CHSPE and reasons for taking it, explain in a letter why you believe the person to whom you are writing should or should not take the exam.

March Test

A. Write a one or two paragraph letter of recommendation for a friend or relative you know well. Assume this person will use the letter in seeking the kind of job for which he or she is best qualified.

B. Write one or two paragraphs explaining why you believe physical education should or should not be required in high school.

June Test

A. Write one or two paragraphs explaining why you do or do not believe that the Equal Rights for Women movement has been good for our society.

B. Write a one or two paragraph letter to a friend or relative explaining why you decided to take the California High School Proficiency Examination.

Julia Gottsman reports success with "Describe your favorite food" (Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools, 1978), and reading in Oakland, California, have had success with the following topics:

1. Describe one thing you would change about school and one thing you would not change about school. Tell why you would change it or why you would not change it.
2. "Clothes make the man or woman." Explain why you agree or disagree with the statement.
3. Describe two ways to save water and give examples of people who have done it.

This last topic is no longer workable but, at the time, it succeeded because every San Francisco Bay Area family was worried about living within an assigned water quota. Topic two worked better in some schools when the last sentence was changed to read, "Explain why you agree or disagree with people who believe this statement." The change provides a different meaning. But changes in meaning do not matter. One topic is better than another because students find they can readily write on it in the desired mode.

Topics can vary in the amount of planning help that they give students. The Spring 1972 topic from Tamalpais, mentioned earlier, provides some suggested outlines for the content of the topic, but the Spring 1970 topic provides suggested points of view and different modes without much help with specific content. The letter-report from the California assessment, included above, gives point-of-view choices but it does not suggest a content outline.

Topics can also shift the mode from report to analysis by using words like *describe* and *why* (California assessment, "Description or Report" and "Exposition," respectively). The choice of words can be critical. For instance, some students thought "describe the accident" meant that one should tell about the sounds of the crash and the dents in the cars. For these students, "Report on how the accident happened" might have been clearer.

Topics are always threatened with the problem of being nonfunctional. For some students, if they cannot at least imagine some functional use for the writing, they cannot do well in writing prompts. The prompt on "Directions" from the California assessment is an example of such a situation. A student may know how to give directions for all of the things listed, but the nonfunctional situation keeps the writing from either beginning or being effective. A more functional topic might be "Give directions for getting from your house to your present location."

The same topic raises problems of organization. Many young writers will write their directions in a list: 1, 2, and so on. This is a perfectly reasonable method of organizing directions, and the raters of the writing samples will find very little relevant diversity in method of organization. If organizational skills are to be considered in the assessment, then another topic might be used.

The Function of the Prompt

A topic should be a prompt, a way to stimulate fluent student writing, not a test of a student's knowledge of special facts. The prompt should enable the students to start writing quickly, providing no obstacles of subject matter. The prompt should also be direct and easily understood. Sometimes teachers grow weary of a useful prompt, and, believing "it's time for a more creative subject," they turn to such misguided efforts as the following:

NO MATTER WHERE YOU GO, THERE YOU ARE.

EXPLORE INNER SPACE.

YOU ARE HERE, WHERE IS THAT?

> Think about the picture and the words. Write a prose essay about the relationship between the picture, the words, and you. Remember to write prose—no short stories, poems, or plays.

The student responses to this prompt were usually a struggle to come to grips with some central idea or theme. Examples (with transcripts) are given on pages 14-18.

If the teachers who gave the previous prompt had written on it, they would have found how difficult, if not impossible, the prompt was. A prompt should always be field tested by having teachers and a dozen or so students write on it.

The field testing will usually identify the major problems. The following topic was eliminated after the teachers found that the requirement of special knowledge became an obstacle to writing: "Explain your agreement or disagreement with the following statement: The history of women in our country is the history of oppression."

Two teachers admitted that they did not know enough about the history of women to write a fluent essay on the subject. This particular problem is especially relevant in the prompt selected for exposition. After all, how is one to argue one side of an issue if one does not have special facts distinguishing the various sides of an issue?

Another problem in prompts is the open-ended form. These prompts allow the student to write in any form, from personal notes and journal entries to formal exposition. The readers of these writing samples cannot judge the quality of the writing because the student writers can claim they are writing personal notes to themselves, a rhetorical situation not demanding the usual conventions. The same problem is produced by allowing student writers to fantasize any rhetorical situation.

The grade level is another consideration in the selection of a prompt. In an Oakland, California, reading for fourth and seventh graders, for instance, the teachers selected as a topic "Describe your favorite person." In the third and fourth grades, the topic had to be changed to "Tell a story about a favorite person" because many students in these grades often interpreted "describe" literally, as in "He is six feet tall. He has blue eyes and brown hair."

Kenneth Williams (1977) reports a similar experience in Modesto, California. The fourth grade teachers reported that some topics worked better when "tell about" was substituted for "describe."

Here I am, just a person in a place that means little to my future. I stare into the distance serching the wildersness for servival and begin reaching out into outer space for help. My nouth hangs open in hopes that what is in store for me finds me well.

I'm here in highschool, but for how much longer can I hold on to my friends, teachers and belongings. There is such a vast future ahead of me and I'm bewildered at the sight of new adventure. Yes, in September I must start all over new, making sure the goals my parents have led me to are conquered, and that they have raised me well enough to make them proud of me. I have to make sure that my study habits are good and that my personality catches lots of friends. I'm on my own now with little home security and no now direct orders from home base.

It's sort of scarey really, and when you come right down to it, realizing that soon you have to go up to bat on your own it becomes a dark and lonely world. I'm no longer kept by school, parents or society, but by my own. I must seek what I want and how

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[Transcript] Here I am, just a person in a place that means little to my future. I stare into the distance serching the wildersness for servival and begin reaching out into outer space for help. My nouth hangs open in hopes that what is in store for me finds me well.

I'm here in highschool, but for how much longer can i hold on to my friends, teachers and belongings. There is such a vast future ahead of me and I'm bewildered at the sight of new adventure. Yes, in September I must start all over new, making sure the goals my parents have led me to are conquered,

English Dept. Writing Exam

I am me, but I still don't know what I am. I like to spoof people by playing games, maybe thats me. I don't think so though. Deep inside I know I want to do something great to benefit every one. Maybe my time will come, who's to say? Right now I'm happy, but I am happy most of the time. My moms says that I don't complain much, thats because I want to learn to take things easily. I figure I've got a long time to do, and get done. Maybe I really do mind doing what is required of me to do, I just don't complain about it. I like to do extra little things to make those I love, happy. It gives me a warm tingly feeling inside, especially when I get a reaction. Ive always wanted to go back in time to the way it use to be. I know it would never work though, because we all have to many hostilities towards things to make the world any better. I feel that descrimination is of the mind, and those who feel this are the ones who make these things they descriminate against look bad. I even have trouble figuring out why I'm here, because when I do what society has brought me up to think are naughty things, I feel very badly, or I do it again. Its no use to try to figure myself out, because I never want to grow up

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and that they have raised me well enough to make them proud of me. I have to make sure that my study habits are good and that my personality catches lots of friends. I'm on my own now with little home security and no more direct orders from home base.

It's sort of scarey really, and when you come right down to it, realizing that soon you have to go up to bat "on your own it becomes a dark and lonely world. I'm no longer kept by school, parents or society, but by my own. I must seek what I want and how

I know I'll have to begin to accept more and more responsibilities as I get older, but in a sence, I never will grow up, I know! I've always wanted to live a perfect life, especially when I create a family, but what is a perfect life? Should I live like my parents, like the bible, like the poor, like the rich, like the foreign? I guess I'm just going to wait, and live like me, and live every day the way it comes.

(I could keep writing for days, but we're not suppose to. I would probably even contradict myself!)

[Transcript] English Dept. Writing Exam/I am me, but I still don't know what I am. I like to spoof people by playing games, maybe thats me. I don't think so though. Deep inside I know I want to do something great to benefit everyone. Maybe my time will come, who's to say? Right now I'm happy, but I am happy most of the time. My moms says that I don't complain much, thats because I want to learn to take things easily. I figure I've got a long time to do, and get done. Maybe I really do mind doing what is required of me to do, I just don't *complain* about it. I like to do extra little things to make those I love, happy. It gives me a warm, tingly feeling inside, especially when I get a reaction. I've always wanted to go back in time to the way it use to be. I know it would never work though, because we all have to many hostilities towards things to make the world any better. I feel that descrimination is of the mind, and those who feel this are the ones who make these things they descriminate against look bad. I even have trouble figuring out why I'm here, because when I do, what society has brought me up to think are naughty things, I feel very badly, or I do it again. Its no use to try to figure myself out, because I never want to grow up I know I'll have to begin to accept more and more responsibilities as I get older but in a sence, I never will grow up, I know! I've always wanted to live a perfect life, especially when I create a family, but what is a perfect life? Should I live like my parents like the bible, like the poor, like the rich, like the foreign? I guess I'm just going to wait, and live like me, and live every day the way it comes.

(I could keep writing for days, but we're not suppose to. I would probably even contradict myself!)

I feel who ever wrote this question see's the world as a big b/a In other word's pepartment head's, I feel somewhat puzzled by the question. Now if it would of come from a math teacher I would of felt like they were Really seeing the world this way the way of a b/a. But for some strange and unkown reason I feel that the penson who wrote the so called question if it was and inglish teacher had to be depressed about some thing in the world. Because my feeling toward you the english depatment is 75% of the time you live, is living in happiness and fun the other 25% is really not bad at all. Beause all you do is set back behind a desk belowing at kids or lughing at them Some time's you correct paper's but you really don't have to put out alot of work

So Mr. White and the rest of the depatment, I have come to the

conclusion that the 1970 composition question was terriable. I feel that you the department were quite dump to over look the fact that this was not a question it is some depressed teacher's feeling's toward the world. Sorry I have to quit but time requirees me to do so.

[Transcript] I feel who ever wrote this question see's the world as a big bla In other word's Department head's, I feel somewhat puzzled by the question. Now if it would of come from a math teacher I would of felt like they were Realy seeing the world this way the way of a bla. But for some strange and unkown reason I feel that the person who wrote the so called question if it was and inglish teacher had to be depressed about some thing in the world. Because my feeling toward you, the english department is 75% of the time you live, is living in happiness and fun the other 25% is really not bad at all. Beause all you do is set back behind a desk belowing at kids or laughing at them Sometime's you correct paper's, but you really don't have to put out alot of work.

So Mr. White and the rest of the department, I have come to the conclusion that the 1970 composition question was terriable. I feel that you the department were quite *dump* to over look the fact that this was not a question it is some depressed teacher's feeling's toward the world. Sory I have to quit but time requirees me to do so.

In the fourth grade samples below, the middle and high papers seem to have more fluency because the writers have decided to "tell about" rather than describe. The topic was to describe a favorite pet:

Low

I wish I had a crocodile a man eater it is log and fat. It wad a hundred pose and egle. It runs slow.

Middle

I wish I had a brown fluffy baby monkey to play with. I would play with it every day and feed it. I would never sale it. It would have and soft fluffy bed and it would have a fluffy, fat soft pillo. I like him a lot.—The End

High

If I could have anything I would want a clear blue ice cold swimming pool in the summer. It would be so clean that you could see the bottom.

In the winter I would want to own a ski resort and go skiing every day. The snow would be so white that you would feel like you were skiing in whipped cream.

I would swim all day in the summer, and ski all day in the winter. Life would be boring inbetween.

Sometimes a district or school desiring to score samples from the fall and the spring, will need to alternate comparable topics so that students will not be writing on the same topic twice. Rae Jean Popham (1978), in a paper for the UCLA Writing Project, recommended that the students be divided into two groups and two topics be alternated between them:

Group A	*Group B*
Fall: Describe your favorite object.	Fall: Describe your favorite person.
Spring: Describe your favorite person.	Spring: Describe your favorite object.

During the scoring, all of the samples are put in the same stack. The topics do not indicate when a paper was written. Furthermore, by the end of the anchoring period, the topics tend to blend, and differences in what is described—object, person, place, entertainment, gift—do not make any significant difference in the scoring.

Summary Checklist

1. Organize a committee to adopt assessment objectives.

2. Match the topic to objectives, selecting mode and rhetorical situation.
3. Field test the topic, having students and teachers write on it.
4. Review the topic for problems of unfocused creativity, special knowledge, open-ended form, and grade level differences.
5. Never give a prompt that can be answered with *yes* or *no*.

Directions

Once the topic has been selected by field testing with teachers and students, many parts of the directions will have been decided. One obvious decision is time, and because most secondary schools have fifty-minute periods, the time is usually thirty to thirty-five minutes with fifteen to twenty minutes for giving directions, distributing necessary materials, and collecting samples.

The typical format for directions to teachers is as follows:

1. The students will write on the assignment prompt in their English classes.
   Note: Sometimes students take more than one English class. Teachers should check to make certain that students write only once during the school day. Send students who have already written on the prompt to the department chair, who will use them for collecting writing samples from individual teachers.
2. Periods one, two, and three will write on one prompt, and periods four, five, and six will write on another prompt, following the pattern suggested by Popham (1978, p. 21). In this way, students will not pass along the topic during lunch time.
3. The prompt will be written on the blackboard and read aloud by the teacher. All teachers should give students the same directions. (Some districts have tape-recorded teacher directions and replay them so that every student gets exactly the same words.)
4. Each student will be given a 3″ × 5″ card and asked to put on the card: (1) name (last name first), (2) grade, (3) teacher, (4) period, (5) first or second semester, (6) sex (male or female), (7) course title, and (8) code number on paper.
   Note: The information requested on the 3″ × 5″ card matches what is requested in the coding for each individual paper, except for the course title. See student directions for coding.

5. A student will collect the 3″ × 5″ cards, and the teacher or a student will record this information on the attached master sheets:

Student Name	*Grade*	*Teacher*	*Period*	*Semester*	*Sex*	*Code*
Bill Jones	11	Ms. Smith	2	1	M	4332-11-05-2-1-2

6. Each teacher will be assigned a number, noted on the attached master list of teachers in the department or grade level. Put the teacher number on the board. Notice that all numbers have two digits. (Ms. Smith's number is 05.)
7. Hand out to the student the student directions sheet. Read it aloud to the students.
8. Ask students to write on one side of the paper only. If a student needs a second page, ask the student to write on a separate sheet of paper and put the student code in the upper right-hand corner. Staple multiple sheets together.
9. Students will be allowed to use the dictionary.
10. Teachers will be allowed to answer questions about the prompt, coding papers, and other matters not related to how to write the assignment. Clarifying the prompt is approved. (Students will not be penalized for writing off the topic if the teachers have decided to focus exclusively on writing. However, if the teachers have decided to include reading as part of the assessment, students will be penalized for not writing on the topic.)
11. Teachers should make certain that they have staplers, lined paper, and No. 2 pencils. Students must write with No. 2 pencils or dark black ink.
12. Collect the papers at the end of the period and turn them in to room ___, complete with 3″ x 5″ cards and master sheets. Erase the prompt if you leave the room for a period.

A typical format for directions to students is as follows; these directions are duplicated and each student gets a copy:

1. Prepare your name code, completing the directions below.
   NAME: List the last four numbers of your phone number:
   — — — —

Note: If you do not have a phone, put your house or apartment number, and two or three different numbers from the following: 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. Complete all four spaces.

2. GRADE: Put the two numbers that represent your grade: — —

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Number:	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12

3. Teacher: Your teacher will tell you his/her teacher number: — —

4. Period: Put the number of the period: 1,2,3,4,5,6: __

5. Semester: If this is first semester, put a *1*; if second semester, put a *2*: __

6. Sex: If you are male, put a *2*; if you are female, put a *1*: __

7. SUMMARY: Now list the numbers shown in the margin, putting the bottom number in the last space to the right:

   — — — — — — — — — — —

   Notice that you have eleven digits in your number.

8. Fill out the 3″ × 5″ card. Put your name (last name first), grade, teacher, period, first or second semester, sex (male or female), course title, and name code above.

9. Put your code (see 7 above) in the upper right-hand corner of your paper. This should be the same number as the one you put on your 3″ × 5″ card.

10. Write with a No. 2 pencil and keep some margins on both sides. You may erase mistakes.

The information in the previous instructions will have to be revised to fit local circumstances. For instance, some schools have the quarter system, not the semester system. Another change might be the need for additional information. A department might want to save papers from year to year, and this would require adding a two-digit space so that the last two numbers of the year could be listed. One department added a code on student attitude, asking the student to list a number indicating how much the student liked to write: *1*, I hate to write; *2*, I do not like to write; *3*, I like to write now and then; *4*, I like to write very much.

This code enabled the department to compare scores on the writing sample and student attitudes toward writing. Another department asked the students to rank their own papers on a scale of one to six, from low to high, using the same scale the teachers would later use. This enabled the department to compare teacher and student ratings. Another district asked students to rank their papers the way they thought their teachers would rank the papers. This number enabled the district to estimate how well the students understood the way their teachers evaluated writing.

These directions for teachers and students assume that a number of decisions have been made: (1) How long will the test period be? (2) What classes will be given the test? (3) Will students be allowed to use the dictionary? (4) Will teachers be allowed to clarify directions? (5) Will teachers be allowed to encourage a student to respond in whatever way possible? (6) How many numbers will be in the code? (7) Will there be alternate topics for pre- and post-testing? (8) Will there be topic changes after a break for lunch?

Changes in grade level or objectives often change the directions for a writing sample. For instance, students in the elementary grades are often told the topic a few days before the writing so that they can begin to think about the topic. Many students in the upper elementary grades cannot focus their attention on writing for fifty minutes, and a longer preparation period is needed to ensure an adequate sampling of elementary writing. Because elementary classes are not broken into periods, and because elementary students have a more limited attention span, the time limit can be removed in the elementary grades. Sometimes the objectives change the directions. For instance, if the program puts a high priority on memorized spelling words, then the direction may forbid students to use a dictionary.

The following directions from the San Mateo Elementary School District (Graham, 1979) show the changes required because of changes in grade level or objective:

> *Informing Students*
>
> A day or so prior to taking the Writing Sample, students will be informed about the entire Writing Sample process. Teachers will use this time to answer questions, establish expectations and make students feel comfortable with the Writing Sample. At this time you may post the topic: "My Favorite Object" and advise the students to be thinking about possible subjects for their composition.

Prewriting/Brainstorming

On Wednesday, October 10th, teachers will spend a class period involving students in prewriting or brainstorming activities on the topic. *This preparation time is very important and should not be omitted under any circumstances.*

During this discussion period, brainstorming by students may be in large or small groups and with teacher direction should elicit ideas relative to the composition topic.

No Time Limit

Although the entire process should not take more than fifty minutes for the average student, you may allow slower students additional time (within reason) to finish their Writing Sample.

Distribution of Materials

Approximately five minutes should be allowed for the distribution of paper. Students are to use No. 2 pencils only during the Writing Sample. The handwriting must be *dark* enough for xeroxing. This time should also be taken to *make sure students' papers are properly coded.* Please remind students using more than one page to code each page accordingly and staple pages together securely when they are finished.

Reading the Prompt

When all students are ready to begin, the teacher will read the following prompt to the class:

> Describe an object (not a person, an animal, or an event) you are especially attached to, and tell why you feel strongly about it. You might want to consider: the way you discovered it; the way it came into your life; the way it has taken on meaning through time. (For fourth grade students, the assignment may be modified to include writing about a favorite pet.)

Testing Conditions

It may be necessary to spend some brief time answering questions before the writing actually begins; however, *students may not receive assistance from any source, i.e., teacher, dictionary, etc., at any time during the writing or proofreading of the Writing Sample.*

Proofreading

Students should be reminded to title their compositions and spend some time proofreading their papers before handing them in.

Special Handling for Learning Disabled (L.D.) Students

All L.D. students will participate in the Writing Sample except those identified by the school L.D. teacher as unable to participate.

Please be sure to pull all L.D. students' papers and return them to the building L.D. teacher as these papers will be scored separately. The scores of L.D. students *will not* be included in the overall competency results.

Note that San Mateo removes the time limit, but does not allow students to use a dictionary. San Mateo also announces the topic a day or two before the prompt is assigned and provides time for prewriting activities. Note also that special provisions are made for students who are classified L.D.

In districts where a central district reading is not possible, the distribution of sample anchors to the school and the collection of a school's samples in each scoring category will enable the district office to have some information on how papers are being scored. A central scoring is the most reliable procedure, but the involvement of many teachers at the school site also has its inservice benefits.

The most reliable scoring of writing samples takes place when the readers are trained together and read together in the same room under common direction. But sometimes districts cannot find the time or money to bring teachers together for a district scoring of papers. In such instances the department or grade level can usually arrange to score at least a sample of the papers written. Also, in such cases the district's language arts coordinator needs to provide some common anchor papers for all schools and some training for at least one teacher in each school. (The importance of anchors is discussed in detail in the section on scoring.)

The following is an example of directions to teachers when a district office scoring cannot be arranged:

To: Leaders of readings at school sites
From: Language arts coordinator

1. Work closely with the chair or trained person in your department or grade level.
2. The district prompt and directions are enclosed.
3. During the scoring, prepare a description of the scoring categories. Please send this to the district office.
4. Try to give the writing assessment in your classes during the week of October 4-8.
5. Enclosed are some recommended anchor papers for the prompt selected. Use these to practice anchoring the scoring categories. Send to the district office (with the scoring descriptions) examples of the scoring categories in your school.
6. The scoring room should be a large and pleasant place.

One set of problems in the directions for a writing sample focuses on the reproduction of papers for anchoring, analysis, and reports. Students should use No. 2 pencils, should keep at least small margins on both sides, and should keep some space at the top and bottom. Students should be encouraged to write heavily. Light pencil marks

and crowded pages make clear reproduction difficult if not impossible. Furthermore, light copies make the reader's job difficult.

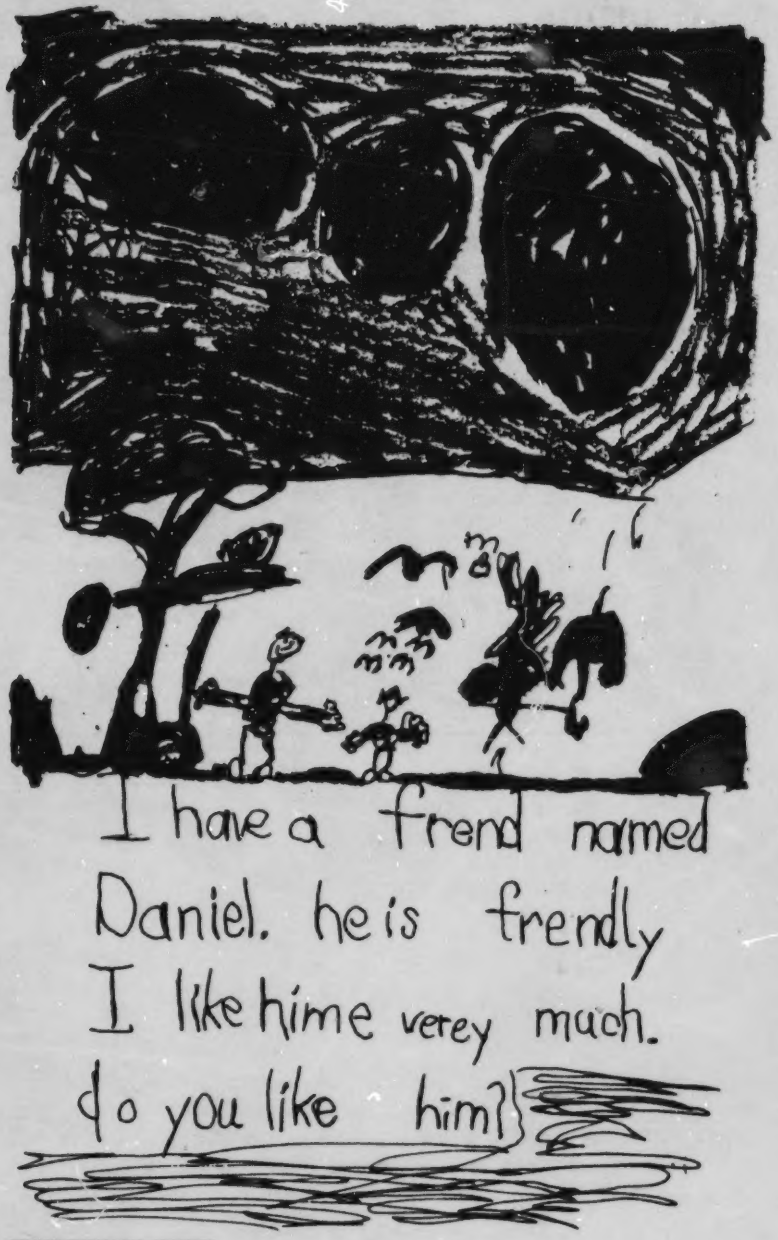
Another set of problems in the directions focuses on how much direction to give the students. The best rule is to give as few directions as possible and keep the prompt as simple as possible. The primary purpose is to elicit some quality writing from the student. Other purposes are secondary. The more students have to be told about the prompt in order to write, the greater the number of students who will write little or nothing. The directions sometimes become very complex because large amounts of information are being coded in the numbers in the upper right-hand corner. Some schools have solved this problem by doing the coding one day and the prompt the next. The coded but blank papers are simply returned to the student the next day and the prompt is then given.

A final set of problems focuses on eliciting writing from K–3 students. These students should be encouraged to draw and then dictate or write. One value of this kind of sample is that one can demonstrate with concrete examples the importance of drawing in writing development. Donald Graves (1975) has argued that drawing is a form of prewriting for young children. The two examples on pages 28 and 29, one drawing plus dictation and the other drawing plus writing, were collected in an assessment of early elementary writing and scored by K–3 teachers. Notice that the child who can write ("I have a friend named Daniel") is also the one who tells his story more effectively in drawing.

Summary Checklist

1. Arrange the time to fit the class schedule and the attention span of the students.
2. Prepare the number code for information desired on samples.
3. Prepare directions for teachers, stressing the importance of giving encouragement but no assistance with the content of the prompt.
4. Prepare coding directions for students.
5. Distribute to teachers the prompt, which they will write clearly on the blackboard.
6. Stress to students the importance of dark copies and some kind of response.
7. Vary directions to fit the needs of different grade levels, allowing K–3 students to draw and dictate or draw and write.

[Transcript] Me and my brether have a gun. We shoet each other with pretend bullet. I hide my gun from my friend because he breaks my toys.



[Transcript] I have a frend named Daniel. he is frendly I like hime verey much. do you like him?

Scoring

After the topic has been selected, directions and prompts have been distributed, and students have done the writing, all of the samples are collected in one room and a few teachers are selected to help prepare the scoring criteria. These teachers will be the table leaders at the district reading, each table leader having six to eight teacher readers. If possible, these table leaders should be experienced readers.

The second important decision concerns how much time the district needs for a reading. The following formula provides a reasonably accurate estimate:

Total papers X 2 (readings) X 0.20 (third reading)	= *Y*
Y divided by 60 (minutes)	= *X*
X divided by number of teachers + 2 hours/day for anchoring	= total time needed

Example:

1,000 papers X 2 (readings) = 2,000 X 0.20 (third reading)	= 2,400
2,400 divided by 60 (minutes)	= 40 hours
40 hours divided by 5 teachers	= 8 hours + anchoring
2 hours of anchoring + 4 hours	= 6 hours (first day)
2 hours of anchoring + 4 hours	= 6 hours (second day)

Total: two days, 8 hours of scoring, 4 hours of anchoring
Note: After two days, anchoring can be reduced to 1½ hours.

The third important decision is whether the table leaders will prepare a list of criteria before or after selecting prototypes from the samples, and whether the teachers at the district reading will be given a rubric (a list of criteria) before the teachers are asked to score selected anchors. If one is working with experienced readers,

rubrics can come first or later. The process works well either way. However, if one is working with inexperienced readers, the best procedure is to pick anchors or prototypes first and let the rubric or list of features evolve from the discussion of the reasoning behind the scores.

The scoring of the papers has two stages: (1) the selection of the anchors by the table leaders, and (2) the reading.

Selection of Anchors by the Table Leaders

The selection of anchors requires some decisions on number of categories, the range within a category, the effect of form and directions on categories, the middle decision, and the special problem papers. The most common scoring categories are four, six, and eight. Sometimes readers use nine, seven, and five, but choosing an odd number is always a mistake because readers will be drawn to the middle number as a compromise between high and low. The decision about whether to use four or eight is determined by the purpose of the reading. If the reading is for a general profile of student writing, for only three grades, use four. Four categories are easier to score than eight—after all, four categories are easier to remember—but using four makes fewer distinctions. Different levels of skill will be clumped together. If one intends to use the reading to measure change between September and May, use eight categories. Six is a reasonable compromise between scoring consistency and the various purposes of holistic scores. Six scoring categories are essential for more than three or four grade levels because one needs the spread to get the grade level effect—largely matters of phrasing and maturity of content.

In readings to determine whether students have attained a minimum level of competency for high school graduation, use four categories if only three grade levels are involved and six categories if more than three. With six categories, students at the bottom are more likely to show some improvement in subsequent writing samples even though they still may not achieve the minimum level of competency. Some improvement is encouraging to both students and teachers.

No matter how many categories of skill are selected for scoring, there will be slippage within a given category. That is, although several papers might have one number, they often will have recognizable differences. The following papers were all put in the one, or low, category on a six-point scale. Their differences are apparent.

> My Nanna gave me a two dollar bill and I have 10 dollar and I put them in my mirror.
>
> "My dog"
>
> I have a dog. He is live in a box. Or day He playing in the yard.
>
> No July the 3 i found some money the anout 20 dolor the thing i bouth a football and we aply ball evey day itset the rain days and one day it got a hole in it and i pach it up and evey sient then om air have mo air come out

Miriam Ylvisaker (Myers and Ylvisaker, 1978), in a commentary on these three papers, observes that the first is by a fourth grader, the second by a fifth grader, and the third by a sixth grader, showing that poor writers can become more fluent as they get older. Even though the third paper is much longer than the other two, it is still in category one.

After deciding the number of scoring categories, the head reader must decide whether the samples collected have the desired normative distribution. The exact location of a paper—the definition of the boundaries of a scoring category—is relative. That is, the decision is based on the distribution of the papers in the group. The number of writing samples can have, then, a distorting influence on the anchors selected. The larger the number of samples, the less likely the categories will be skewed in one direction or another.

A good example of this problem occurs in the readings to determine whether students have attained a minimum competency level for graduation. In one district, all of the 8,000 ninth and tenth graders wrote two samples, and these 16,000 samples were used to determine the range of competency within the population. Using this range and sample papers at each scoring level, a district committee decided what scoring level represented minimum competency. During the summer, the students who had failed to attain minimum competency in the first test took writing courses and then wrote a second set of samples for scoring. This second set of samples did not have the distribution used to establish district norms because all these samples came from writers who had failed the first test.

How then does one find anchor papers with which to score the second set of samples? The solution is to use anchor papers from the first reading to establish the scoring categories for the second reading. The head reader must decide whether table leaders will find anchors among samples collected or use anchors from a previous reading. If anchors are used from a previous reading, then table leaders are asked to find other examples from the samples collected.

If anchors are to be found among the samples collected, then the head reader asks the table leaders to read for one hour, selecting papers at random from the stack, and to identify two papers that could be used as anchors or prototypes for each scoring category. If there are six categories, then each table leader will select twelve papers. A paper is called an anchor because it defines a scoring category and keeps a reading anchored or tied to a normative scale, the bottom score being for bad papers and the top score being for good papers.

After selecting two anchor papers for each scoring category, the table leaders will write down the characteristics which they believe differentiate among the categories. In a Huntington Beach, California, Unified School District (1977) assessment, the prompt specified particular features:

> Please read and think about the following:
>
> All of us at one time or another have felt like we would like to be something or someone else. You have a weekend to be anything you like. You may want to be a sea shell, a movie star, a sports hero, a feather, or anything.
>
> Writing Assignment:
>
> Tell what your new self will look like
> Explain what your new self will do
> Explain why you want to be that thing or person

The selection of categories in the Huntington Beach reading had to take into consideration the three specifics in the prompt:

> A 6 response addresses all three aspects of the assignment. Though it may have minor faults, it will be well organized, detailed, and well written. A 5 response includes all three aspects of the assignment but may emphasize only two. Although the 5 response will be less fully developed, less well organized, and perhaps less fluent than the 6 response, it will show an overall competence in writing. A 4 response includes all three aspects of the assignment, but is weak in the development of two. Although it is less fluent than a 5 or 6 paper, it does display overall competence.

During the anchoring session with table leaders, the head reader will duplicate copies of the anchors selected by the table leaders, listing on a separate sheet the scores suggested by the table leaders but removing all scores from the duplicated copies. The head reader will then ask the table leaders to read and score the duplicated copies and arrange the anchors in a sequence on the table. This process will cause the table leaders to make a few adjustments in the way they scored their original anchors. The head reader will

then ask the table leaders to vote on the scoring category for the anchor papers. Those papers on which there is quick agreement for a particular score become the anchor papers. Those papers on which there is not quick agreement are often used to illustrate particular problems in scoring. For instance, in the bottom levels, fluency usually can increase a paper's score, but in the upper levels, fluency does not usually increase scores. However, a few table leaders may want to give fluency more weight in the upper scores, and the papers that reveal this difference of opinion will be used to identify the problem and reach an ultimate decision on when fluency will and will not increase a score.

One of the hardest decisions for the table leaders is the selection of the anchors which define the difference between upper-half and lower-half papers. On a six-point scale, this selection would be the 3 and 4 papers. Examine the papers on the following pages. The 1 paper ("I was in inpression Buy my mother . . .") and the 2 paper ("The person I remember . . .") are shorter than the 5 paper ("Mrs. ____ was my teacher . . .") and the 6 paper ("The person in my life who made a great impression on me . . ."). The bottom papers also have more mechanical errors, with the run-on sentences creating comprehension problems for the reader and the spelling errors producing some hesitations for the reader but few fundamental confusions. Examine the four papers on pages 35–37 and try to guess the qualities of those in categories three and four.

These anchors illustrate the problems of setting boundaries for categories. The 3 will probably be a longer 2, and the 4 will be a 5 with mistakes. The 4 in most readings does not have any serious errors, and the 3 always shows some indication of fluency. The 6, of course, does not have to be a perfect paper. The 6 here has several mistakes, one of them being a spelling error (*vegtible*) and another being the need for a period (following *die* in the last paragraph). What the table leaders found to be the offsetting strengths were the paper's elegant phrasing (*"He survived the surgery, the strong willed man he was."*) and telling details (*"sipping cocoa"* and *"which is now just weeds"*).

After the table leaders have read the duplicated copies and arrived at a consensus on how to score them, the head reader should ask the table leaders to read for another hour, attempting to classify randomly selected papers in one category or another. Any papers judged difficult to categorize should be given to the head reader for duplication and later scoring by all the table leaders.

I was in inpression Buy my Mother she is a great women I live with here it is just me and my Mother My father Dont live with us me and my Mother go a lot off place together she gets involve with my sport and help me she makes sher I go to a good school and she make sher I take goo care of my body and I have and inpression on my Mother Becuse she is a great Mother Ms Brooks.

[Transcript] I was in inpression Buy my Mother she is a great women I live with here it is just me and my Mother My father Dont live with us me and my Mother go a lot off place together she gets involve with my sport and help me she makes sher I go to a good school and she make sher I take goo care of my body and I have and inpression on my Mother Becuse she is a great Mother Ms Brooks.

The person I remember the best was my bestfriend in elementary school she also live up the street from me. She had just move from Danbill Her dog got lose and I helped her catch him.

I new her for along time until she move We still try to keep in touch But I will never foreget the memories.

[Transcript] The person I remember the best was my bestfriend in elementary school she also live up the street from me. She had just move from Danvill. Her dog got lose and I helped her catch him.

I new her for along time until she move We still try to keep in touch But I will never foreget the memories.

"Great Impression"

Mrs. Christine Wilson was my teacher during my elementary years. She made a great impression on me. I remember her mostly, because of the love and understanding she gave me. She was always there when I needed her and she still is to this day. We had our ups and downs as normal people do but we always managed to solve our problems.

She treated the other students as adults. not like fourth, fifth, and sixth graders as we were. All of the other students as well as teachers respected her. She has always made me feel like a daughter to her

Today we are still very close friends even closer than before. She is one heck of a lady. I will always love Mrs. Wilson.

[Transcript] "Great Impression"/Mrs. Christine Wilson was my teacher during my elementary years. She made a great impression on me. I remember her mostly, because of the love and understanding she gave me. She was always there when I needed her, and she still is to this day. We had our ups and downs as normal people do, but we always managed to solve our problems.

She treated the other students as adults, not like fourth, fifth, and sixth graders as we were. All of the other students as well as teachers respected her. She has always made me feel like a daughter to her

Today we are still very close friends even closer than before. She is one heck of a lady. I will always love Mrs. Wilson.

[Transcript] The person in my life who made a great impression on one was a friendly, strongheaded man. Mr Engstrom, who lived next door to me. He was a man, rather old, about 85 or so. He was a grandfather figure to me. I called him Grandpa Engstrom

As a child of about 7 years, I remember running over to visit him everyday after school. We used to sit by the fire sipping hot cocoa and he'd tell me all

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touched me so much, I shall never forget
it as long as I livl.
When he was 40 years old he was
by himself in a cabin out in a forest and was
accidently shot in the arm by a rifle. In
this tragic accident his arm was half way
blown off, but he didn't panic, he forced
himself to get to a train. He had to
take the train to the nearest docter
who was about 10 hours away.
The docter said his arm was to be
amputated or he may die. Grandpa Engstrom
refused! He survived the surgery the
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When he was 40 years old he was by himself in a cabin out in a forest and was accidently shot in the arm by a rifle. In this tragic accident his arm was half way blown off, but he didn't panic, he forced himself to get to a train. He had to take the train to the nearest docter who was about 10 hours away.

The docter said his arm was to be amputated or he may die. Grandpa Engstrom refused! He survived the surgery the strong willed man he was.

Grandpa Engstrom is dead now but I still look over in his old vegtible garden, which is now just weeds and can see him working away.

In some readings there will be a group of papers called splitters. These papers will tend to be widely distributed in categories. This is especially true of the type exemplified on p. 39.

The student does have some sensitivity to form. He begins with a direct quote: "You got me worried. I thought you would never come back." Then the author shifts to a more distant point of view: "Then I woke up and my dog wasn't there. I went down stairs and told my mom and dad." If the same point of view had been maintained, the line would have read: "Then, I woke up, and you were not there." Finally the author brings the piece to a swift conclusion, increasing the impact of the ending.

The table leaders must decide how to deal with splitters of this kind. The most common solution is to put the paper in the lower half, reserving the upper half for papers that are mechanically respectable and allowing the scoring to shift between a 2 and 3. An upper-half paper should not make the reader struggle to understand. What will keep the paper in category two are the anchors defining category three. For instance, the first paper on p. 40, defined as a 3, will keep the paper on p. 39 in category two for most readers.

Now compare the second paper on p. 40 with the first. Both papers are about a baseball glove, but clearly the first one is better than the second one. The last paper would be a 2 and the previous paper a 3 if the readers decided to keep mechanical lapses in the lower half and distribute the upper ranges among those who vary in their skills with organization and development.

The solution for splitters, then, is to clearly define the difference between upper- and lower-half papers and to define what should be emphasized on either side of the splitter. When a question exists about a particular paper, examine the anchors on both sides of the suggested score.

The Reading

The head reader runs the reading, and the table leaders monitor what happens at each table. Each reader places scored papers directly in front of his or her position, and the table leaders circulate around the table, rereading some of the scored papers to determine whether readers are staying on the target categories. When papers are being read for the second time, the table leaders check to make certain that no paper has two scores differing by more than one

Wellcom Back pall I mist you.

You got me warede I thot you wod never com back. wear have you ben the past week. You smell Bad. How Bat a Bath. then I will feed you. then wee can get in Bed and go to selp. We have a Big day to moros. then I wook up and my Dog wasent ther. then I went down sters and tolb my mom and bab. they sed He we ll Be Back So I went out side. . . . then two weeks wint past. thin I was walking down the street and I saw my Dog He was hit By a car. Then I tock him hom and I Berde him in are Back yard. The end

---

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When I was in 3rd grade I got this baseball glove for my birthday. I don't really remember what the brad name was but I think it was a Wilson, I most of had it for about 3½ years. And it was the best glove I ever had and the best thing at that time. It was broken in real good too. I use to oil it all the time that why it was in and good shape All my friends would throw there glove, but didn't do that to ofen unless I got real mad. Then one day I went to get it and it wasn't there. So I looked all over but dodn't found it. Then I went out side and saw in one the grass It had been all chewed up by the dog. So we threw it out and about a week later I got a new one, but I didn't like it as much. And it was my favorit glove ever.

I am espesially attached to a old glove of mine because it was my fists glove and I love the game of baseball. My grandfather bought the glove when I was nine years old and I've had it ever since the reasons the glove is so valuable to me is because it was the fists glove I used in a game when I played little baseball and it's so mall it makes me laugh because it reminds me of old times now the glove still hangs in my closet.

point. If the difference is more than one point, then the table leader reads the paper a third time and changes one of the original scores, moving the total of the paper up or down. Usually no more than five percent of the papers need third readings. The table leader puts the total of the two scores on all papers, circling the score and underlining it in the center of the first page of the sample.

During the reading, the table leader should be watching for good sample anchors which can be used for re-anchoring, and special papers which could be used by the head reader for handling special concerns. Table leaders should attempt to keep readers on the right anchors. If a reader is obviously scoring too high or too low, the table leader should select some test papers and ask the reader to score them. Then if the scores are still off, the table leader should draw the reader away from the scoring table and confer with the reader on how the misscored paper fits the criteria of the boundary categories. In other words, if a reader scores a paper as a 2 and the score should be a 3, ask the reader to compare the paper with the 4, then the 3, and finally the 2. Work on comparisons with the boundary categories, not comparison with other papers in the misscored category. If a reader wishes to argue that a paper should not be a 2, then ask whether a boundary paper should be a 1 or 3. The reader may find that the paper is different from other 2s, but it is certainly not a 1 or 3.

The reading should take place in a large room and the scoring tables should give the readers plenty of room for putting a sequence

---

[Transcript] When I was in 3rd grade I got this baseball glove for my birthday. I don't really remember what the trade name was but I think it was a Wilson, I must of had it for about 3 1/2 years. And it was the best glove I ever had and the best thing at that time. It was broken in real good too. I use to oil it all the times that why it was in and good shape. All my friends would throw there gloves, but didn't do that to ofen unless I got real mad. Then one day I won't to get it and it wasn't there. So I looked all over but didn't fined it. Then I went out side and saw in on the grass It had been all chewed up by the dog So we threw it out and about a week later I got a new one, but I didn't like it as much. And it was my favorite glove even.

[Transcript] I am espesially attache to a old glove of mine because it was my firts glove and I love the game of baseball. My grandfather bought the glove when I was nine years old and Ive had it ever since the reason the glove is so valueble to me is because it was the firts glove I used in a game when I played little baseball and its so small it makes me laugh because it reminds me of old times now the glove still hangs in my closet.

of anchor papers face-up in front of them. The head reader should stress the following points in the introduction: (1) scoring and grading are different, (2) mixing grade levels does not harm students, (3) talk should be kept to a minimum and questions should be directed to table leaders, and (4) read fast, do not think about a paper too much, and score your first impression, making certain it fits the anchors in front of you.

The grading issue is confusing to some teachers. Grading is a pedagogical device, sometimes used to encourage students who are not doing well. Holisitc scoring is used to get a group profile of students, showing the range of writing skill from top to bottom. But the score on an individual piece of writing is not a statement of an individual's competency in writing. If other prompts were given, if more time were allowed, if the day were different, the individual's score might change. Because the individual's score might change if the prompt were changed, most districts use more than one prompt in the design of a minimum competency writing assessment. And because grades are used for pedagogical purposes, and for assessing performance within a particular course without a district norm, teachers should not use their grading procedures to score papers in a holistic assessment.

Some teachers worry about mixing grade levels, fearing that the lower grade levels will not receive a fair reading. The fact is that in a fourth through twelfth grade reading, some fourth graders always do as well as some twelfth graders. Grade levels, the readers are told, are separated for study after the reading is over. Putting all papers into the same reading ensures that the range of writing skill will be expressed in the distribution of the scores.

The head reader begins the training of the readers by giving them six anchor papers and by asking them to arrange the six in a sequence from low to high, using, in this instance, six scoring categories. Finally, the readers should mark scores on the papers, 1 for low and 6 for high. After the readers have finished arranging and scoring their papers, the head reader asks them to vote on specific papers: "How many gave paper A a 6? How many gave it a 5? How many a 1, a 2?" and so on. In the sequence of the voting, papers scoring 3 and 4 are saved for last because the middle distinction is the hardest. If the anchoring selection has been done with care, the voting will be clear and certain in its placement of the anchors. In a reading on a four-point scale at Bret Harte Junior High in Oakland, the teachers voted as follows on six papers:

The Anchor Papers: How Leaders Scored Them	How the Teacher Readers Voted to Score Papers			
	Score I	Score II	Score III	Score IV
Anchor Score I	14	3	0	0
Anchor Score II	2	16	0	0
Anchor Score III	0	2	12	3
Anchor Score II	2	12	4	0
Anchor Score IV	0	0	3	15
Anchor Score I	11	7	0	0

The vote that signals a problem in this sequence is the last one. The anchor 1 got a large number of two votes. This requires that in the next sequence, the anchor for 2 be very strong but clearly below the 3 so that some of the seven readers who voted for 2 the first time will vote for the 1 category when the paper is reconsidered later. The head reader keeps introducing anchors for scoring until the trouble spots disappear in the voting.

At this point in the reading there is very little talk about the papers. Experienced teachers have often worked with one another for several years and have had numerous discussions on grading and literacy. Asking for reasons too early in a reading can easily start an argument. The teachers often know each other's position already. But scoring papers and building strong categories beforehand makes useless argument less likely when it comes time to discuss reasons for differences among the categories. Notice also that one of the eighteen teachers in the Bret Harte reading did not vote on two anchors. This is not a problem if the teacher votes on later anchors.

The discussion starts during the reading of the second sequence of anchors: "How does category one differ from two, two from three?" Each table leader is asked to take notes on this discussion, and the head reader can collect these notes and summarize them for posting in the reading room. This is especially important for the report that comes later. Rubrics should grow out of the discussion of readers on how they established the categories.

The head reader should ask the readers to put the first score on the back of the paper in the center of the page. The second score should be put on the front of the paper in the upper right-hand corner. The final total score, prepared by the table leaders and their assigned assistants, will be put at the front-center of the first page, circled, and underlined twice. If the table leaders find that an individual reader continues to give odd scores, the table leaders should assign that reader to the head reader for special duties, such

as collecting papers and counting them. In the transition from first to second readings, the head reader must circulate the papers correctly so that different readers do the second reading.

As the final papers are being scored, the head reader should begin to arrange the room for counting papers and asking readers to total their categories. When two readings are added together, the six-point scale produces an eleven-point scale beginning with two. The readers should, if possible, know the totals before they leave the reading. A recent reading conducted in the San Mateo Elementary District produced the following totals:

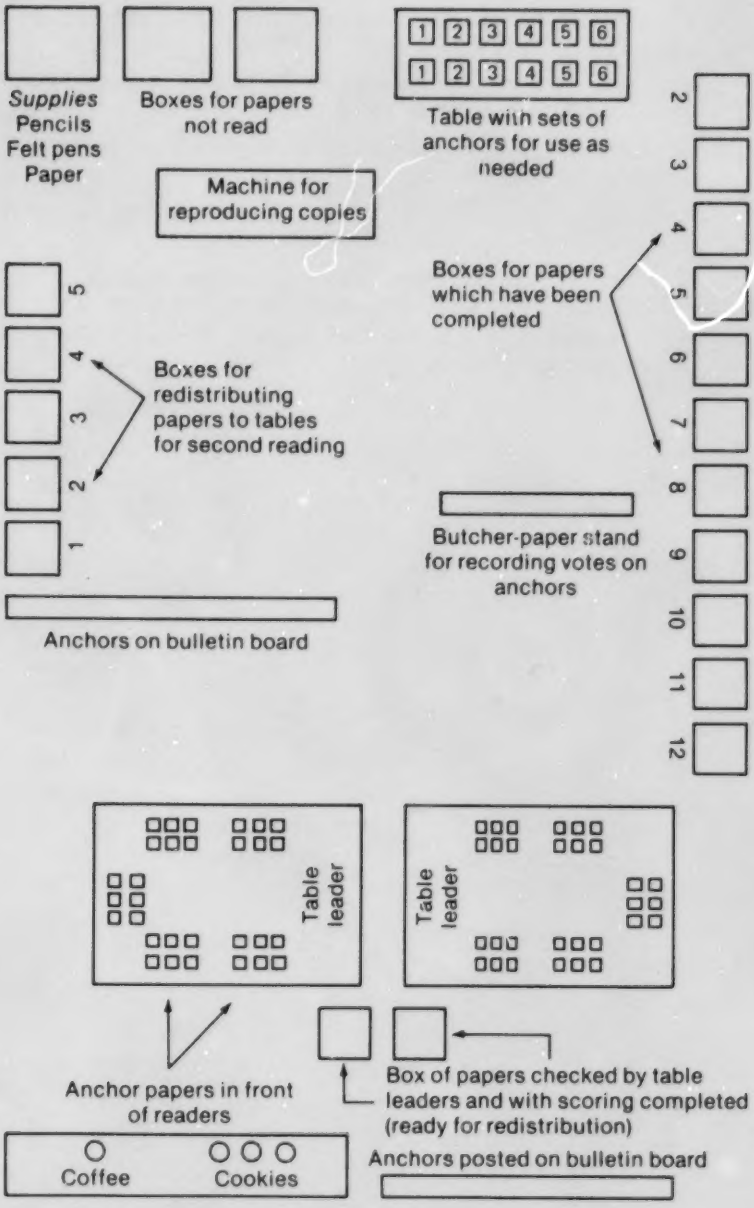
Scores:	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2
Totals:	85	109	251	368	567	534	787	344	382	51	52

What is interesting about these totals is that the distribution approximates a bell-shaped curve. The Central Limit Theorem in statistics tells us than any variable which is itself the sum of other random variables will have a normal distribution. The approximation of the bell-shaped curve is one way of checking whether the reading did an adequate job of distributing the range of writing ability across the six scoring categories. What is also encouraging about the distribution shown above is that the numbers scoring 12 and 11 exceed the numbers scoring 3 and 2. Sometimes one worries that teachers will not let any students attain the top categories. If the sample is large enough, if the sample is from mixed classes, if the anchoring has been done correctly, and if the readers stick to the anchors, the distribution should be approximately bell-shaped.

To provide space for all the activities that must take place during a reading, the head reader should arrange the layout of the reading room approximately as shown on p. 45.

The Summary Checklist

1. Select table leaders and estimate number of teachers and days for the reading.
2. Table leaders select anchors from sample.
3. Table leaders identify traits of scoring categories.
4. Table leaders score papers to test reliability of anchors.
5. Table leaders identify papers that focus on a particular problem, especially the relative weights of fluency and coherence.


Supplies
Pencils
Felt pens
Paper
Boxes for papers not read
Machine for reproducing copies
1 2 3 4 5 6
1 2 3 4 5 6
Table with sets of anchors for use as needed
Boxes for papers which have been completed
2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Boxes for redistributing papers to tables for second reading
5 4 3 2 1
Anchors on bulletin board
Butcher-paper stand for recording votes on anchors
Table leader
Table leader
Anchor papers in front of readers
Box of papers checked by table leaders and with scoring completed (ready for redistribution)
Coffee
Cookies
Anchors posted on bulletin board

6. Begin reading by having readers score a set of anchors, one for each scoring category.
7. Have readers score a second set of anchors with more papers in the middle categories.
8. Have readers score special anchors which focus on any problem trends noted in the voting.
9. Have papers read twice by different readers and a third time if the two scores differ by more than one point.
10. If the writing samples represent the normal school population, not just those who failed the previous test, then estimate how well the anchors distributed the scores by seeing whether the distribution of scores approximates a bell-shaped curve.

The Report

The report prepared on the reading can include four parts: (1) the rubric describing the six categories, including diagnostic information; (2) the charts showing the distribution; (3) proficiency reports; and (4) feature analysis.

The preparation of the rubric begins with each table leader taking notes on comments that teachers provide for each scoring category. Later the scoring categories are analyzed for features that define the categories. Sometimes the rubric is a careful breakdown of the prompt and directions, as in the rubric for the essay examination in California State Colleges (White, 1973):

> Many observers of our society claim that modern man, immersed in materialism, is "owned by his objects." Yet many of us have objects that we treasure not just for their material value but for a variety of other reasons. Assignment: Describe one or more objects which are important to you. Explain what values they represent and comment on those values.
>
> The following directions for scoring were distributed to all readers engaged in the grading of question 1:
>
> > The student should be rewarded for what he does well in response to the question. Here the student is asked to *describe* one or more *objects* important to him. He is further asked to *explain* what values they represent and to comment on those values. He is told to think about the question and to plan his response.
> >
> > Note that the question does not demand that the object or objects be unusual ones.
> >
> > Essays which misinterpret "objects" as "objectives," and which deal mainly with generalized abstractions (life, God), should be read sympathetically, but they should ordinarily not receive above 2, since they fail to understand and properly respond to the question.
>
> *Possible Scores:*
>
> 6 A superior response will not just name one or more objects but *describe* them in some detail, and it will not just identify the values represented but *explain* and comment on them, their

nature and their source. A superior paper will be literate and orderly.

5-4 These scores will be useful for a well-handled paper which is deficient in one or two characteristics of the superior response, i.e., in description of the object or objects and in explanation of the values represented, but which is otherwise competently written.

3-2 These scores will be useful for the following kinds of papers:
—those in which only one part of the two-part question is addressed;
—those in which the representativeness of specific objects is ignored;
—those which treat the subject in superficial or stereotyped fashion;
—those in which the writing exhibits several weaknesses, in wording and other respects.

1 This score is to be used for papers which are lacking in focus and substance, depart from the assigned topic, and/or exhibit serious writing faults.

* Non-response papers and papers which do not fall into the foregoing categories, extensively argue with the question, or are otherwise idiosyncratic, should immediately be brought to the attention of the table reader and the question leader.

On the favorite-object topic, the California assessment of the writing of high school seniors used a somewhat different approach for the rubric and the holistic scoring. First, the scoring procedures asked the readers to give each paper two holistic scores, one for the "writer's overall sense of composition" and another for the "writer's overall competencies with written English." Then each reader was given the following rubrics, one for composition and one for competency:

Score for Composition

First, the reader assigns an even number score according to the following descriptions:

8 The writer identifies an object, supplies descriptive details, and provides a strong accounting for his or her attachment to the object either through lively anecdote or an insightful discussion of values (usually more than one value). The paper has almost no irrelevant statements and has an easily observable coherence or plan. The writer wastes no space on talking about how hard it is to think of something to write about, nor does he or she begin simplistically with a formula, such as, "The object I am going to write about is. . . ."

6 The writer gives some descriptive detail about the object and at least one examined reason for his or her attachment to the object. The paper has no serious incoherence and little in the way of irrelevant or digressive statements.

4 The writer merely names the object and says a bare minimum about his or her reasons for having the attachment to the object; or the writer describes an object without stating or implying much about the personal attachment. In some cases the writer may confuse the issue by talking about drawbacks or disadvantages to the possession (for example, wanting to sell it and get a better one). The paper may be somewhat incoherent or contain clearly irrelevant statements or issues.

2 The writer does not seem to have understood what he or she has been asked to do. For example, the paper may simply volunteer a topic which has not been called for. The paper will usually contain obvious irrelevancies or be so halting and brief that it communicates little information to the reader.

Score for Competency in English

The reader judges the writer's overall skills in punctuation, diction and usage, and sentence sense. Scores are assigned according to the following broad descriptions:

5 Outstandingly varied, mature sentences, with strong diction and almost no errors; notable in use of subordination and free of modifiers.

4 Above-average sentence sense; few errors in usage or punctuation (and none of them major); perhaps some hint of a sense of style.

3 About average for the papers scored; many short sentences, perhaps with some comma faults and an occasional fragment; but overall, a suggestion that the student has a fair grasp of sentence sense.

2 A cluster of errors in grammar, usage, and punctuation, or a paper which has a dead-level simplicity and monotony of style; practically no sentence without an error of some kind; but in spite of these problems, generally readable.

1 A paper so badly marred with problems that the reader can hardly follow the ideas presented, either because of stumbling syntax (mixed structures and the like) or because of word choices and such egregious form problems (including spelling) that the reader finds it difficult to be sympathetic with the writer.

Note: Matters of spelling are intentionally *not* specified in the descriptions of papers rated 5, 4, 3, and 2. The reader should ignore spelling except for the 1 paper. This category allows for the paper with so many misspelled words that the reader must actually struggle to follow the thread of thought. Such a paper suggests a degree of near illiteracy.

This procedure can work quite will when there is plenty of time for training and when experienced readers and table leaders are available. But in most readings, the best approach is a careful selection of anchors, a development of a rubric from the anchors, and

3rd Grade Criteria 1976-77								
Rating	Ideas	Style and Vocabulary	Handwriting	Spelling	Mechanical Conventions	Grammar and Usage	Sentence Structure	Organization Paragraph Dev.
1.	lacks coherency rambling not well developing	limited vocabulary general lack of adjectives	generally not neat inconsistencies in size, formation, and alignment	mispells common words omits vowels lacks symbol/sound correspondence	misuse of capitals lack of capitalization for proper nouns capitals in middle of words lack of punctuation	incorrect tense shift tense within composition	sentence fragments run-on sentence	lack of paragraphing lacks sequence lacks development of ideas—has beginnings but no middle or end
2.	literal translation of topic lack spark nothing seems to happen	generally lack attempt to go beyond common words	generally neat	mispells common words phonetic approach to spelling most words	capitals at beginning of sentence inconsistent capitalization and end punctuation	subject-verb agreement is evident	some awareness of sentence structure sentence fragments sentence patterns are not varied	lack of paragraphing generally indent first paragraph lacks progression of ideas
3.	imaginative ideas begin to emerge main idea is carried through	attempt to use expanded vocabulary some use of adjectives stronger verb selections	generally neat	occasionally misspells common words attempt to spell difficult words is phonetic	first word of sentence capitalized capitals sometimes appear in middle of sentence end marks used correctly	satisfactory subject/verb agreement	some variety in sentence patterns most sentences declarative some evidence of sentence fragments or run-ons	lack of paragraphing generally indent first paragraph conclusions are apparent good beginning sentence generally good sequence
4.	well-developed cohesive ideas creative spark consistent point of view	use of descriptive words use of transitional words and phrases helps flow of writing	generally very neat	correct spelling of common words generally successful attempts at spelling difficult words	uses a variety of mechanics well	possessives are used correctly tense is inconsistent subject/verb agreement is good	varied sent- patterns few sentences fragments and run-ons	lacking paragraphing first paragraph is indented well-developed beginning, middle and end

then scoring with one holistic score, providing time for reanchoring and consideration of special problems.

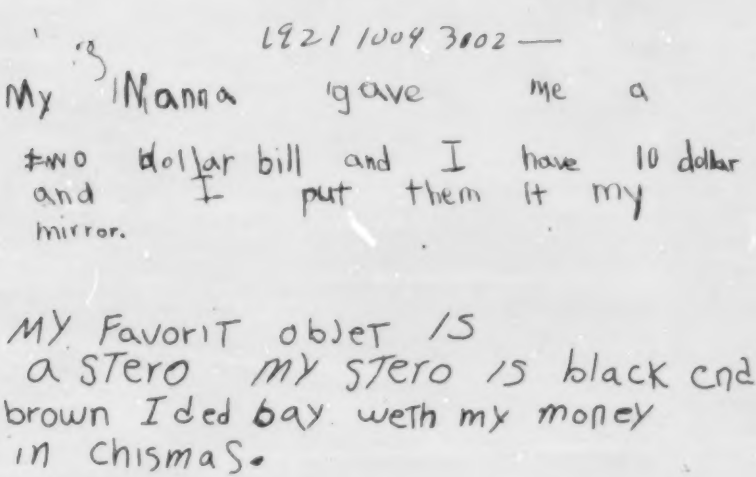
Changes in grade level can sometimes influence the rubric. For example, the following prompt and rubrics were used in a third grade reading (Martin, 1976–77):

> Writing Sample Topic
> Grade Three
>
> [Students were asked to study a photograph of an elephant doing a headstand with the apparent "help" of a small boy supporting one hind leg.]
>
> Students: Look carefully at the picture. Then think about what might have happened before the picture was taken, what is going on in the picture, what will possibly happen next, and who else might be involved who is not in the picture. Then write a story about your ideas. The idea is to write about what the picture means to you; use a little time for planning before you start to write.
>
> If you have time before the papers are collected, please check back over your story for punctuation, capital letters, good sentences, and spelling.
>
> You may take 30 minutes, but no papers should be turned in to the teacher before 15 minutes, so take the time to make a good story. If you want to use a new word whose spelling you are unsure of, use it anyway.

Handwriting tends to become less important as the students get older. In the Jefferson County, Colorado, rubric (Jefferson County School District, 1976; see facing page), the teachers included handwriting as a critical feature in every scoring category through the ninth grade. By the eleventh grade, handwriting was listed as a critical feature only in the lowest category and then the only characteristics listed were negative.

The rubric provides some general information on how distinctions are made among the categories, and the rubric is always distributed with samples of the anchors so that the public or other teachers can check their own intuitions by reading papers. A rubric without sample anchors is to a large degree uninformative. In addition to the rubric, teachers may decide to include some papers that illustrate specific problems that need correction. The diagnosis with the sample gives some help to those teachers who are uncertain of how to help students who do not do well in the assessment.

The next six papers illustrate how diagnosis is published in the assessment report. The first two samples show the problem of students who need fluency:


1921 1004 3002
My Nanna gave me a
two dollar bill and I have 10 dollar
and I put them it my
mirror.
MY Favorit objet IS
a stero my stero is black cnd
brown I ded bay weth my money
in chismaS.

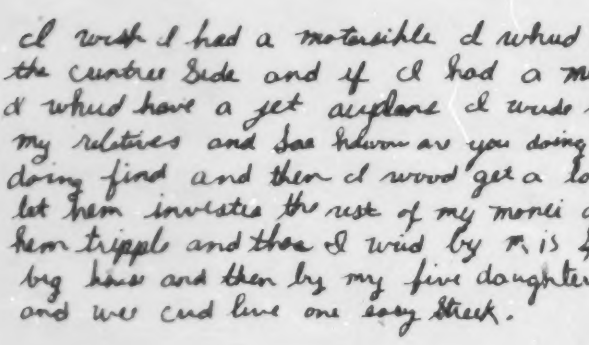
These two students need practice in writing in journals every day, filling paper with notes on what they have observed, writing dialogues back and forth with neighbors (an exchange of written notes with a student nearby), improvisations—whatever finger exercises help get the flow of thought going so that the student has some fluency on the written page. Teaching these two students letter formation and run-on sentences will only inhibit an already deeply inhibited inclination to write. The two students whose papers appear on pages 54 and 55 have a different problem. They have fluency but very little coherence. In fact, "Me and Lego" is almost incomprehensible. These two students need audience responses in writing groups, and sentence combining exercises so that they learn to combine ideas in some way other than "and." They need practice in revising papers after work in student editing groups, hearing another student read their papers aloud. They might even profit

[Transcript] My Nanna gave me a two dollar bill and I have 10 dollar and I put them it my mirror.

My Favorit objet is a stero. My stero is black and brown. I ded bay weth my money in Chismas.

from a few exercises on editing principles which they seem to ignore or do not know. But sentence combining and audience awareness are the primary needs at the moment.

The following student seems in need of attention to both fluency and coherence:


cl wish I had a motersikle I whud ride all ove
the cuntree Side and if cl had a mellon dollors
I whud have a jet airplane I wude visit all
my reletives and Sae howoa are you doing a am
doing find and then I wood get a lowyer and
let hem investes the rest of my monei and let
hem tripple and then I wud by mis Spikes a
big house and then by my five daughters gifts
and wee cud live one easy streek.

This student needs practice with sentence combining and editing of spelling. This is the type of student who has developed some fluency; he has a point he wants to make and does not appear to hesitate to do it in writing. But the student might be overwhelmed by being told of all the things that are wrong with the essay. It appears that the student could easily learn sentence combining skills, and in the meantime the editing of the spelling might be done by an assigned partner. Later, after sentence combining skills are reflected in the writing, the student could be given two words per week to learn, beginning with "whud" and "mone," later "cuntree" and "lowyer." I am uncertain whether reading aloud would help. The sound seems to be there, as if the student could actually hear the words.

The student who wrote "My favorite object" on p. 56 is quite a different case. This student already thinks of himself as a writer. He has an idea for the interesting detail ("blowing the dust off" the comic book) and the dramatic implication ("remember it's

[Transcript] I wish I had a motersikle I whud ride all ove the cuntree side and if I had a mellon dollors I whud have a jet airplane I wude visit all my reletives and Sae howoa are you doing a am doing find and then I wood get a lowyer and let hem investes the rest of my monei and let hem tripple and then I wud by mis Spikes a big house and then by my five daughters gifts and wee cud live one easy streek.

10-12-4 -15

Me and Lego

O Once upon a time I think it is a good thing to play with. I think when you have nothing to do And I think that when you have fun. And you can do stoff. when you have something ta do I go when I have nothing to do and I play whith my frends with it. The thing abet my lego I thing it is a good thing to paly with when you have noth to do. And I have a lot of with my lego. Every time I paly with my lego and I made a car and a truck. I thimk abet my lego it is a good thing to play with and I thing il shand be a good thing to play with. And it col be a good thng and I can do stoff with my lego. And it shud hav a good stuff to do with my lego We can make a lot of stuff of lego. I thing it is a good thing to do.

[Transcript] Me and Lego/O Once upon a time I think it is a good thing to play with. I think when you have nothing to do. And I think that when you have fun. And you can do stuff. when you have something ta do. I go when I have nothing to do and I play whith my frends with it. The thing abet my lego I thing it is a good thing to play with when you have noth to do. And I have a lot of with my lego. Evey time I paly with my lego and I made a car and a truck. I think abet my lego it is a good thing to play with and I thing it shund be a good thing to play with. And it col be a good thng and I can do stoff with my lego. And it shud hav a good stuff to do with my lego We can make a lot of stuff of lego. I thing it is a good thing to do.

50

I remember one day I was in the store and this girl came up to me and said, "Hi! Kinetha". I looked at her very particuly you know, like who are you? she said "Jackie from Vallejo where you use to live. I said "oh, and then from there on I fergot about my other friends because, I remember her and I haven seen her in along time. And we talked about our old days when we were very little. So we went to Santa Cruz and I seen Carol Gamison, She said "Hi to me and I looked twice and then I remember her from School at King. I said oh I Carol, as if I never even knew her, and we go to school together everyday. I mean, I completely forgot all about her, cause my good friend and I been having such a good time every since we remember each other that day. It's been very exciting being with her and she must go back, to Vallejo where she lives now. Bye Jackie!! Call me sometimes, She O.K.

[Transcript] I remember one day I was in the store and this girl came up to me and said, "Hi! Kinetha." I looked at her very particuly, you know, like who are you? she said, "Jackie from Vallejo where you use to live. I said "oh, and then from there on I fergot about my other friends because, I remember her and I haven seen her in along time. And we talked about our old days when we were very little. So we went to Santa Cruz and I seen Carol Gamison, She said "Hi to me and I looked twice and then I remember her from School at King. I said oh I Carol, as if I never even knew her, and we go to school together everyday. I mean, I completely forgot all about her, cause my good friend and I been having such a good time every since we remember each other that day. It's been very exciting being with her and she must go back, to Vallejo where she lives now. Bye Jackie!! Call me sometimes. She O.K.

My favorite object

I have a magic comic book, every time I open it, it turns me into the super hero on that page! One day it gave me the powers of Spiderboy, another day I was Batboy.

Most people ask me where I got this comic book but I never tell them but you're lucky. I'm going to tell you where I got my book and how I got it

One day when I was in San Francisco I wandered in to this old comic book store. There was nobody in there but an old man. I browsed for a while till a little comic book caught my eye. I picked it up, after blowing the dust off it. I read Super Hero Digest. I bought the book for a dime

and as I was leaving the old man called to me "remember, it's magic!"

magic"). But he has a few mechanical lapses, and in some parts he might have aimed for more elegance. Nevertheless, he is good. What this student needs is an audience—having his paper posted on the bulletin board in the school hallway, seeing his writing printed in the school newspaper or reproduced on ditto paper and distributed to others, having the teacher read his writing to the class, having other students read and comment on his writing in editing groups. A keen sense of audience and an awareness of how writing is judged is probably all this student needs to improve his already good work.

The preceding six students are useful cases for demonstrating how diagnosis can work with individual students. The report could also include group information on the distribution of papers, the features counted in various categories, and the significant differences, if any, between pre- and post-tests. The charts on pages 63–65 show pre-test and post-test results in a writing assessment.

These charts were prepared for the assessment of writing samples in grades four through twelve in Oakland, California, with all of the papers being read at the same time on a scoring range of 1 through 6. Because the two scores were added, the reported range is 2 through 12. Note that in grade four, the papers primarily range from 2 through 9, and in grade six and above the range is 2 through 12. Furthermore, notice that from seventh through twelfth grade

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[Transcript] My favorite object/I have a magic comic book. every time I open it, it turns me into the super hero on that page! One day it gave me the powers of Spiderboy, another day I was Batboy.

Most people ask me where I got this comic book but I never tell them but you're lucky. Im going to tell you where I got my book and how I got it

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the number of scores in the top ranges increases. One can conclude that as the students get older, the group averages on the writing assessment increase. In addition, the solid line and the dotted line show the differences in writing scores from September to May. After the middle, the dotted line should be above the solid line if papers are getting better.

Many writing assessments are given to satisfy state requirements for proficiency standards, a test to determine whether a student has satisfied the minimum requirements for graduation. Teachers who participate in a writing assessment for purposes of minimum competency definitions should exercise great care in the process for selecting the point at which students pass or fail. Many districts have found that the best procedure is to complete the reading as outlined in the previous pages, tabulate the results, and then send the group results and anchor papers to the district proficiency committee and ask the committee to decide where the cut-off point should be. This procedure prevents a situation in which the readers are charged with being "too easy" or "too hard" in deciding the cut-off. A single group of readers should not be charged with the responsibility of deciding how many students are judged incompetent.

Second, no single writing sample should be used as the basis for deciding an individual's competency in writing. Twenty samples would be better. But districts cannot afford to collect and score twenty samples so some compromise will be necessary. In Oakland, California, the students took three tests for writing skills—two writing samples and one mechanics test. The student was required to pass any two of the three. The proficiency procedure should also provide a chance for the student to appeal the competency decision, providing several opportunities for the student to write the samples and have them scored. Using the same anchors could help keep the scoring range relatively intact.

Feature analysis is also included in some reports on writing assessment. The analysis displayed in Tables 5 and 6 of the National Assessment (National Institute of Education, 1975) is reproduced on pages 66 and 67.

Feature analysis is best done after the scoring is complete. Simply select a random sample of papers from each scoring category and count the features that concern the school district. The results of the count can provide baseline data for discussing results in other readings. Districts often start with a list of features like those in Table 6 as the scoring guides for assessment. This list is

usually prepared from a list of errors found in the district curriculum guide.

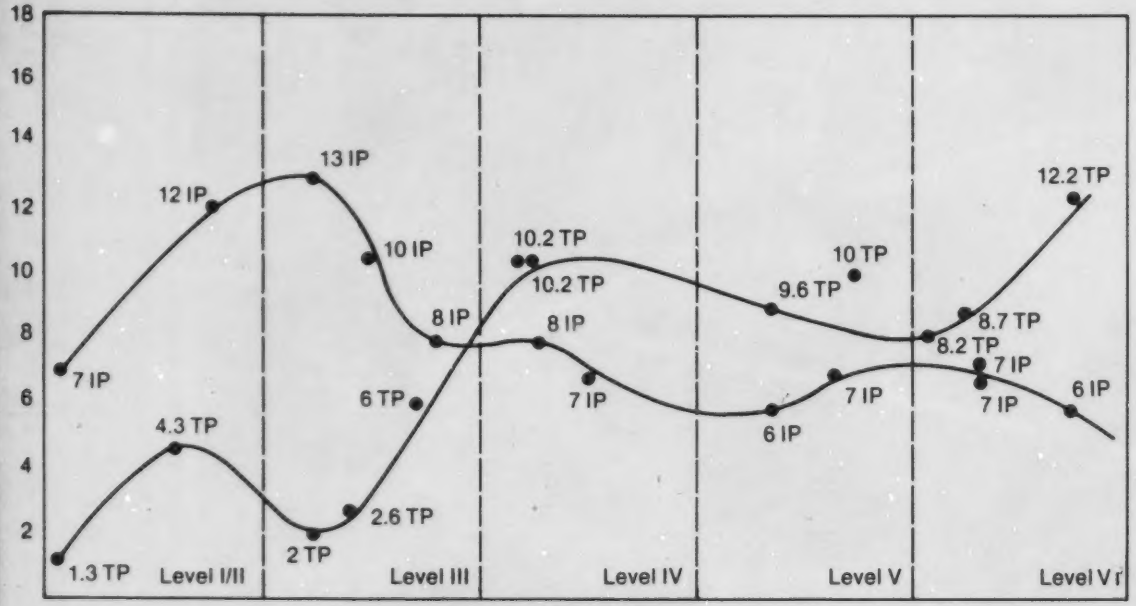
But the error count can be very misleading. An excellent paper can have a spelling error. Some counts are unequal. For instance, examine the following:

1. The people is running down the street.
2. The people, their clothes on fire and anguish in their eyes, is running down the street.
3. Charles Jones, who owns the car, is here.
4. The man, who owns the car, is here.

The subject-verb agreement in the second sentence is probably less serious than the subject-verb agreement in the first sentence. Sometimes students who are adding embedded modifiers for the first time, as in the second sentence, lose track of the subject-verb agreement relationship. The error seems more serious in the first sentence because the subject and verb are next to each other. If there is a comma error in the third and fourth sentences, is the error counted as one or two? If it is counted as two, then the single problem of setting off nonrestrictive clauses is being given double weight in relation to other problems. The point is that error counting is not as simple as it sometimes seems.

However, the easiest feature analysis is the type that counts errors and other surface conventions. The most difficult feature analysis is the type that attempts to examine discourse issues that are below the surface. In other words, one must use surface features as a reflection of a deeper issue. One example would be the examination of oral language traits and written language traits in the anchors for various scoring categories. The issue is that children usually develop their oral language in dialogues before they are asked to give formal speeches or monologues, but in writing, as Roger Shuy has indicated, students are usually asked to produce monologues without adequate experience at some dialogue level in writing.

The writing samples, then, should show the students attempting to keep the writing close to an oral dialogue or else moving easily into a written monologue. I examined 120 papers, 20 at each scoring level, from a reading in Oakland, California, in order to determine whether there was any pattern of oral and written language at the various scoring levels (Myers, 1978). The oral language traits were called information processing, and the written language traits were called text packaging:



TP = Tert Packaging
IP = Information Processing

Information Processing	*Text Packaging*
1. *Connectors*: and, so, then, well, now	1. *Relators*: but, either/or, while, when, since, if, who, which, therefore, however, for example, and other subordinators
2. *Hedges*: sort of, kind of, maybe, probably, and so forth	2. *Qualifiers*: in a sense, perhaps, rather, somewhat, it is possible that, relatively, and so forth
3. *Leaps*: a lot, just, especially, very, sure, a real ____, all the time, only, plenty, and so forth	3. *Generalizers*: in general, in essence, essentially, it is true that, indeed, certainly, without doubt, largely, for the most part, typically, and so forth
4. Use of *you* (close audience)	4. No *you* (distant audience)

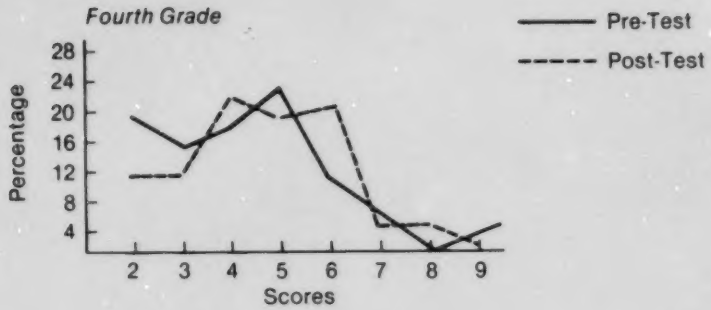
These traits and others were counted and divided by the number of words in the sample, producing an index for information processing (or oral language traits) and text packaging (or written language traits). The other traits counted included the number of clauses with five words or less and twenty words or longer—the assumption being that oral language patterns were governed by limited turns in dialogue, and that written language patterns were governed by extended turns in monologues. The headings "information processing" and "text packaging" were given to the two types of language on the assumption that students use the oral dialogue pattern to generate information and use the written monologue patterns to package texts. The graph on the facing page shows the pattern of information processing and text packaging in the various score categories.

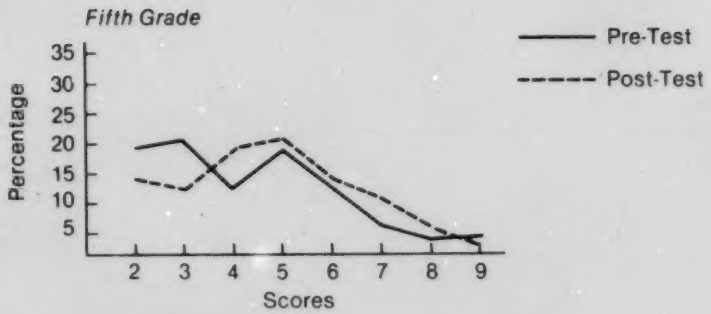
The graph shows that between Levels I and II papers and Level III papers, the distance between text packaging and information processing increases, suggesting an increase in fluency without a consequent increase in those traits which improve the organizational coherence of the papers. At Level IV, however, the text packaging index is larger than the information processing index, and the papers in the VI category show a decrease in information processing traits and an increase in text packaging traits.

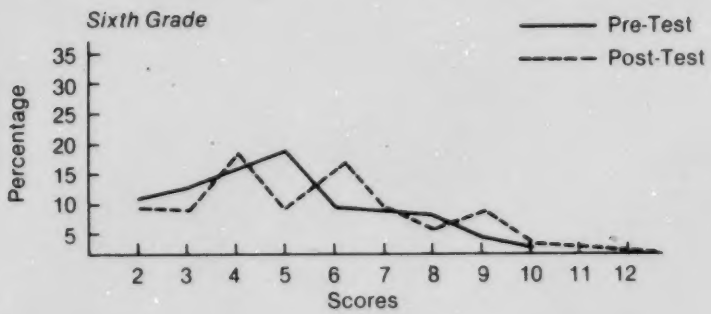
This finding from the writing assessment in Oakland, California, has been shared with teachers in inservice programs, and they have been asked to speculate about what the results might mean in terms of program change. Writing teachers are generally agreed that current time writing programs do not make explicit the difference between oral dialogues and written monologues, and that if these differences were made clear to students, students would show improvement in their scores. One way to make the differences clear is to ask students to translate oral dialogue language ("sorta," "kinda") to written monologue language ("it is possible that," "in a sense"). The approach is still being explored. The point is that analysis of papers can help teachers explore some of the more fundamental issues in the teaching of writing.

The writing assessment and its subsequent report can give the teaching of writing great significance in a district or school program. In addition, the writing assessment procedures can be used by a teacher to score papers in the classroom. The great benefit to participants is the awareness of the range of writing skills in a class, school, or district and a recognition that when teachers elect prototypes of competency, they can usually agree on issues of merit.

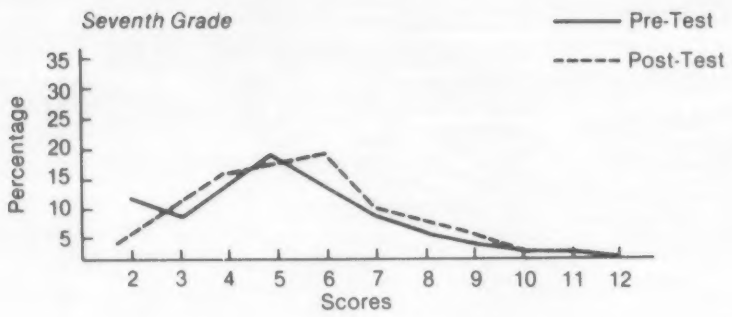
B. Distribution of Scores
Pre/Post

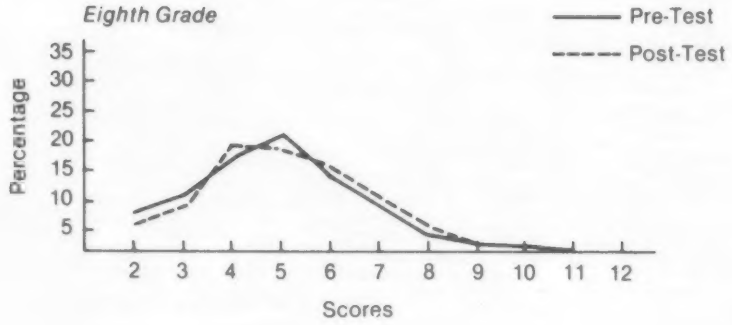


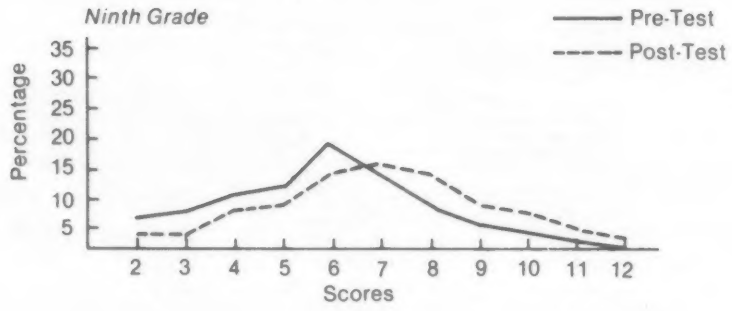




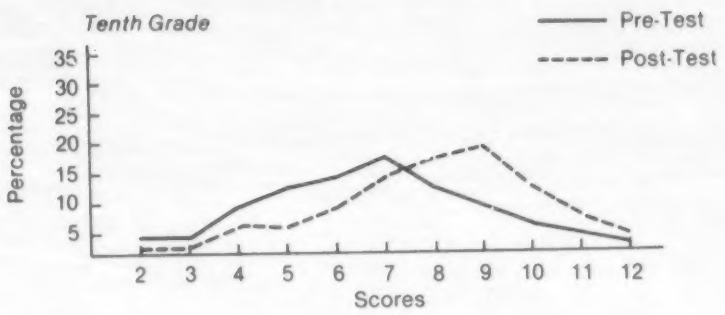
B. Distribution of Scores—Percentages
Pre/Post

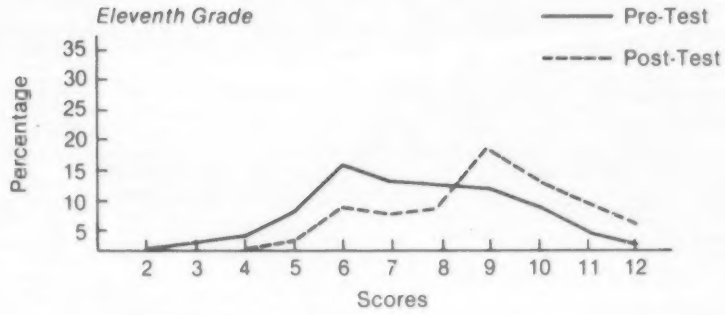






B. Distribution of Scores—Percentages
Pre/Post





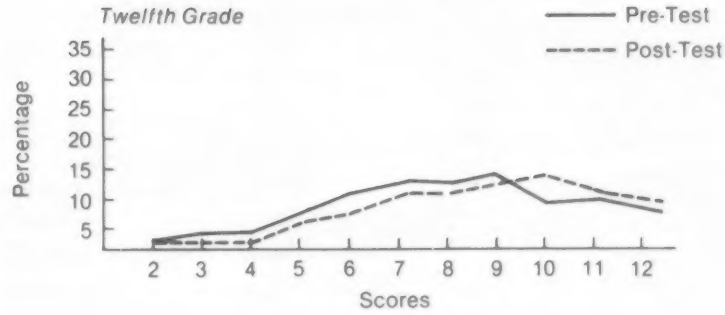


TABLE 5. Average Poor and Good Essays Written by 17-Year-Olds, Counts

	1969		1974		Change	
	Poor	Good	Poor	Good	Poor	Good
Average holistic score	2.8	7.2	2.6	7.2	-0.2*	+†
Average number of words/essay	74.7	176.4	67.3	218.6	-7.4	42.2*
Average number of sentences/essay	5.2	11.2	4.4	14.3	-0.8	3.1*
Average number of paragraphs/essay	1.4	2.1	1.1	2.2	-0.3	0.1
Average number of punctuation marks	7.6	19.4	7.2	26.9	-0.4	7.5*
Average number of letters/word	4.0	4.3	3.9	4.3	-0.1	+†
Average number of words/sentence	16.6	16.6	18.1	16.3	1.5	-0.3
Average number of words/paragraph	61.9	115.3	63.6	135.3	1.7	20.0
Average number of sentences/paragraph	4.3	7.1	4.2	8.9	-0.1	1.*

**Differences that are statistically significant are indicated by asterisks.*
†*Plus signs equal rounded numbers less than 0.05 and rounded percents less than 0.5.*

TABLE 6. Average Poor and Good Essays Written by 17-Year-Olds, Sentences

	1969				1974				Change			
	Poor		Good		Poor		Good		Poor		Good	
	Average Number of Sentences/ Essay	Average Percent of Sentences/ Essay	Average Number of Sentences/ Essay	Average Percent of Sentences/ Essay	Average Number of Sentences/ Essay	Average Percent of Sentences/ Essay	Average Number of Sentences/ Essay	Average Percent of Sentences/ Essay	Average Number of Sentences/ Essay	Average Percent of Sentences/ Essay	Average Number of Sentences/ Essay	Average Percent of Sentences/ Essay
Simple sentences	2.8	48%	5.1	47%	2.1	40%	7.3	49%	-0.7	-8%	2.2*	2%
Compound sentences	0.3	5	0.6	6	0.2	6	0.7	5	-0.1	1	0.1	-1
Complex sentences	1.2	25	4.1	37	1.0	25	5.2	38	-0.2	+†	1.1*	1
Run-ons	0.6	14	0.3	3	0.7	20	0.4	4	0.1	6	0.1	1
Fragments (incorrect)	0.4	7	1.0	6	0.4	9	0.5	3	+†	2	-0.5	-3
Sentences with phrases	3.2	63	8.7	81	2.6	55	11.0	78	-0.6	-8	2.3*	-3
Simple sentences with phrases	2.0	36	4.5	41	1.6	29	5.9	40	-0.4	-7	1.4*	-1
Complex sentences with phrases	1.0	21	3.7	34	0.9	21	4.5	34	-0.1	+†	0.8	+†
Awkward sentences	1.3	24	1.0	9	1.0	26	1.6	12	-0.3	2	0.6*	3

Differences that are statistically significant are indicated by asterisks.
†*Plus sign equals rounded numbers less than 0.05 and rounded percents less than 0.5.*

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